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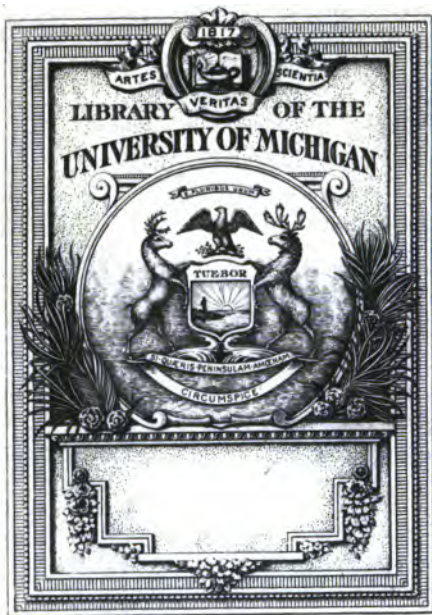
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ANNALS OF A SPORTSMAN

By

IVAN TURGÉNIEFF

Translated from the Authorized French Edition

BY

FRANKLIN PIERCE ABBOTT



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1885

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY,	V
CHAPTER	
I. THE BURGOMASTER,	I
II. JERMOLAI AND THE MILLER'S WIFE,	16
III. BIROUK,	29
IV. MALINOVA,	38
V. DEATH,	49
VI. LGOVE,	63
VII. THE OFFICE,	75
VIII. KARATAIEF,	94
IX. LÉBÉDIANA,	109
X. TCHERTAPKANOF AND NÉDOPOUSKINE,	122
XI. THE PRAIRIE,	141
XII. THE TWO PROPRIETORS,	161
XIII. KOR AND KALINITCH,	170
XIV. THE SINGERS,	183
— XV. THE HAMLET OF THE DISTRICT OF TCHIGRI,	201
XVI. THE RENDEZVOUS,	227
XVII. TATIANA BORISSOVNA AND HER NEPHEW,	236
XVIII. THE DISTRICT DOCTOR,	249
XIX. KACIANE,	259
XX. MY NEIGHBOR RADISLOF,	278
XXI. THE ODNODVORETZ,	286
XXII. THE FOREST AND THE STEPPE,	305

INTRODUCTORY.

BEFORE calling attention in a few words to the merits of the pictures of manners which make up this volume, I will ask the reader's permission to explain the motives that induced me to translate them.

At the time the war in the East was at its height, M. Charrière brought out a book entitled *Mémoires d'un Seigneur russe*; he intended it as a translation of the *Récits d'un Chasseur*, a work by M. Turgéniéff that had had a deserved success in Russia. The newspapers spoke in praise of the translation, and the *Mémoires d'un Seigneur russe* had a speedy circulation. But there was a further trial to be undergone: the Russian readers had yet to pronounce their verdict. When peace had re-established commercial relations, this book found its way into Russia, where it was not very well received. The Russians found that instead of translating the Russian work, M. Charrière had given simply an adaptation—and an adaptation much too free. The author himself confirmed this verdict: in a paper that appeared at St. Petersburg he protested against the travesty under which M. Charrière had presented his work to the French public. This sensitiveness is very natural. A portrayer of manners who has never produced anything but serious works, and works long thought over, does not like to have attributed to him compositions at once incorrect and carelessly written. The French journals, that so generously gave their approbation to M. Charrière's work, did not think fit to reproduce M. Turgéniéff's protestation. Lest it may be inferred from this silence that the protest would be out of place in their columns, I will give it here in its entirety:

“There has just fallen into my hands a French translation of one of my works, published two years ago at Moscow. This translation, entitled, I know not why, *Mémoires*

d'un Seigneur russe, has been the occasion of several articles in different foreign journals. You will doubtless easily understand that I do not think it proper to enter into a discussion with my critics—in general much too indulgent towards me; but what I have at heart is to protest against the translation upon which they have formed their judgment.

“This pretended translation is a veritable literary mystification. I do not speak of the mistranslation, the errors in which it abounds. They are unavoidable in a translation from the Russian. But, indeed, one can have no idea of the changes, the interpolations, the additions, to be met with on every page. One would not recognize it. I affirm that in all the *Mémoires d'un Seigneur russe* there are not four consecutive lines faithfully translated. M. Charrière has above all taken care to adorn my style, which must seem to him much too poor and shabby. If I desire some one to say ‘*et je m'enfuis*,’ here is the way in which this simple phrase is rendered: ‘*je m'enfuis d'une fuite effarée, échevelée comme si j'eusse eu à mes trousses toute une légion de conleuvres commandée par des sorcières*.’ A hare pursued by a dog becomes, under the playful pen of my translator, ‘*un écureuil qui monte sur un pin, s'y place debout et se gratte le nez*.’ A fallen tree is transformed into ‘*un géant chevelu qui s'était ri des assauts séculaires de plusieurs milliers d'insectes et qui s'incline solennellement et sans hâte vers la terre, sa vieille nourrice, comme pour l'embrasser en expirant sous la morsure d'un fer tranchant emmanché par l'homme d'un fragment de bois que l'arbre avait peut-être fourni lui-même*.’ An old lady ‘*passe du chocolat au safran, puis au café au lait, tandis que des bouquets de poil jaune et frisé s'agitent sur son front et que ses yeux clignotent avec un mouvement aussi rapide que la flèche coureuse de la pendule qui bat soixante fois à la minute*,’ etc., etc., etc. My astonishment may be easily imagined. But here is something still stranger: in Chapter XVII., at page 280, M. Charrière introduces a new personage, whom he complacently describes at length—a kind of pedler, a merchant of chemical matches. What shall I say of this? Well! there is not a word of all that in my book, for the very good reason that such a person does not exist in Russia. What is more curious is that in speaking of this very chapter in his preface, M. Charrière warns the reader that ‘*les préparatifs de l'auteur peuvent paraître un peu longs à notre impatience*

française.' You may imagine, sir, with such a system of translation one can give full vent to one's imagination. So M. Charrière has not spared it: he prunes, he cuts, he changes, he makes me weep and laugh at will; he makes me sneer, and it is for that most of all that I bear him ill-will; he has a horror of the right word, he puts a flourish to the end of each phrase; he improvises all kinds of reflections, images, descriptions, and comparisons. All these improvisations may be charming, and above all full of taste; but I ask M. Charrière himself why he does not feel, in adding all these beautiful things to the text of my work, that he deprives it in that way of the only merit that might recommend it to French readers—the merit of originality? I thank M. Charrière heartily for the kind expressions with which his preface is full. But is it not strange to praise one's wit when you have just lent it so much of your own?

"I. TURGÉNIEFF.

"ST. PETERSBURG, August 19, 1852.

"P. S. You will pardon me for adding a *post-scriptum* to a letter already so long; but among the mistranslations of which I have spoken above, there are two or three so *piquant* that I cannot resist the pleasure of citing them. On page 104 you will find the following phrase: '*Les chiens faisaient tourner leurs queues . . . dans l'attente d'un ortolan.*' Where does he get the ortolan? There is *afsianka* in the text, and the dictionary consulted by M. Charrière would probably have informed him that *afsianka* also signifies *patée pour les chiens*. Page 380, the reader is surprised at the mention (the scene takes place in the very heart of Russia) of 'the perpetual comings and goings of the blacks gravely busy with their work.' Blacks!!! Here is the explanation of the enigma: M. Charrière has confused the words *arapnik*, a hunting-whip, and *arap*, negro, and has arranged the phrase accordingly. Page 338, a dignitary is made to give his hand to a General to kiss! Yet here I suspect M. Charrière errs with design. There are other specimens as good; but it is time for me to stop."

The condemnation is very explicit; it is impossible to misunderstand it. The author declares clearly that M. Charrière has usurped the title of translator. But why so misrepresent the pages of the Russian writer? The answer is not difficult: not only has M. Charrière an imperfect

knowledge of Russian, as the numerous mistranslations show, but he has the presumption to embellish his author. That is unpardonable. The injury M. Charrière has done is real, I admit; yet there are some extenuating circumstances in his favor.

First, the Russian language, and above all the popular idiom that M. Turgénieff puts into the mouths of his personages, presents to a foreigner difficulties almost insurmountable; one might boldly affirm that not one of the French literary men who believe that they know the Russian language understand it sufficiently to translate a single page of these tales. Perhaps, though they are much less learned than M. Charrière, most of them could not render a line of Russian without recourse to a German version of their author. The changes that M. Charrière has voluntarily made in the Russian text should likewise be judged with less severity. More than ever are exaggeration and bad taste in vogue to-day in literature; it has reached such a point that a work exclusively destined to please the best minds would find an editor only with great difficulty. Such being the case, M. Charrière must disarm his judges; no one has contributed as much as he to popularize the Russian author. Finally, the awkward retouches that he has put to the delicate sketches of M. Turgénieff have not entirely disfigured them. You will find in the *Memoires d'un Seigneur russe* most of the fine and touching features that make the original work so valuable; M. Charrière could have suppressed them, and he has not done so: it is a justice that we must not forget to render him.

The reader must understand now why I decided to translate the *Récits d'un Chasseur*; it would be perfectly useless to dwell on that point. However, I think I ought to say that, knowing the difficulties of a work of this kind, I might not have decided to undertake it if the author himself had not encouraged me to do so. Need I add that instead of adopting M. Charrière's somewhat too convenient method, I have submitted in every way to the duties imposed by the modest office of translator. The reader may be assured that he will not find anything in these pages that does not belong to the author. If I have added anything whatsoever of my own, they are mistakes that have escaped my attention. Finally, as there might be throughout the world minds inclined to bring against me the accusation that M. Charrière has voluntarily drawn upon himself, I begged the author to

revise my work carefully, and he very obligingly complied with my request; he even consented to restore some passages that he thought it would be prudent to suppress in the original, and which on account of a peculiar stamp of truth, add still more to the effect of the whole work.

The thought that inspired this composition is worthy of praise. The *Récits d'un Chasseur* are destined chiefly to depict to us the interesting population which, to the shame of our century, is in Russia still groaning under the odious yoke of serfdom. Little country lordlings indeed figure in the stories; but they are placed in the background, and all interest is centred on the men who live under them. Every one will doubtless applaud the courage of the writer, who, under the suspicious régime then in all its vigor in Russia, did not fear to consecrate his pen to such an enterprise. Before him no one had dared to attempt it; the world in the midst of which he introduces us was a region unknown to Russian literature,

Though the *Récits d'un Chasseur* might be considered as an eloquent plea in favor of the freeing of the serfs, the author has in no way sought to give a favorable idea of the Russian peasant. Let us be careful not to think it: he has not concealed the faults of his model. The portraits of which this volume is composed are perfectly true to life, and none of the numerous imitators that M. Turgénieff has at the present time in Russia can in this respect be compared to him.

If the *Récits d'un Chasseur* inspire the attentive reader with profound detestation of the rights which the Russian seigneurs exercise, M. Turgénieff is not to be blamed; he has related conscientiously scenes and traits of popular manners that he has picked up in his wanderings, with his gun on his shoulder, through the different provinces of the Empire. In a word, there is nothing romantic in these pages: they are serious and impartial studies, that depict to us the habits and character of the people. In studying them, the reader comes to know the Russian peasant as perfectly as if he had passed his life in the country.

But while imposing on himself the rule of constantly keeping to the truth, the author has none the less arranged with art the remarks and recollections that he has collected in this volume. Psychological analysis not being his peculiar talent (and, as far as I am concerned, I will not complain of this), the numerous observations with which the

Récits d'un Chasseur are filled bear principally upon the social state, the manners, and the appearance of the Russian peasant. The author has rarely revealed to us the recesses of the conscience. It is in describing the habits and actions of his personages that he generally gives us the bounds of the feelings and desires that animate them. This method assuredly is not new—above all in Russia: it has existed there since Gogol, and is spread through their literature; but I truly believe that in this department M. Turgénieff has no rival, even among us. Nothing equals the eloquence of his silence: a look, a sigh, the slightest gesture, says more under his pen than any analysis. We all know that the ordinary danger of writers who walk in this path is monotony and vulgarity. M. Turgénieff has known how to avoid this, and that too without much effort; he has been kept from it by the nature of his subject, the Russian still being essentially poetic, and probably also from the happy disposition of his mind, which likes above all things distinction without affectation. But where he especially excels is in the picturesque description of the country; he knows how to give with marvellous exactitude the most imperceptible movements, and even the fleeting traits that unexpectedly characterize the mobile and expressive physiognomy of nature. Nothing is beyond him: he depicts to us, with a precision really surprising, the rustling of the forest, the distant murmur of a cascade, the color and changing form of the clouds, the play of a sunbeam that suddenly lights up the plain; and, as Nature is always attractive, all these details, so far from wearying the reader, have an infinite charm. A great deal has been written of late against the literary course that the author has followed in this work. After reading the *Récits d'un Chasseur*, it will be apparent this course could be fatal only to mediocrity.

As to passing in review the different stories of this collection, I do not think that necessary; the reader can very well, without my help, distinguish those most worthy of his attention. Yet, to persons who would simply like to glance through the volume, it is well to indicate the tales that best characterize the Russian peasant. The sad and humiliating situation in which he is found is admirably described in three tales, *The Burgomaster*, *Igove*, and *The Two Proprietors*. The first deserves especial notice: in it the author shows the peasants living under a double oppression; they are seen in the power of a hypocritical and brutal steward,—of a type so

common in Russia,—and of one of those proprietors who, under the form of a man of the world, hides the unfeelingness and calculating egotism of the most crafty schemer. Doubtless there exists a small number of lords who in no way resemble this odious and ridiculous personage, and the author faithfully describes several of them in these tales; but these are only *happy accidents* of power, as the phrase goes. It is surprising to learn, in reading the two other studies, to what a degree are pushed in Russia, on the one hand the tyranny of the seigneurs, and on the other the baseness that servitude imposes upon those near them. But it must not be inferred that all Russian peasants are in this state of degradation: they spring up at the slightest breath of liberty, like the withered grass struck by a sunbeam. Take the men whom the author has shown us in the story entitled *Kor and Kalinitch*: they are not certainly behind in intelligence and dignity the peasants of the most enlightened countries, and surpass them in many other respects. Feelings that attach us to home and most certainly keep at a distance the restlessness and desires, the ordinary causes of revolution, still prevail generally under the humble roof of the Russian peasant; to be convinced of this it is only necessary to follow attentively the discourse of *Kaciane*, and to hear from the mouth of a poor serf words that denote a powerful inspiration in a style that is somewhat biblical. The man who speaks in this way is not an exception; the thoughts that he expresses are common to almost all Russian sectaries, whose number is quite considerable. But to the religious feeling that sustains and guides them in its difficult course the Russian peasant joins a pleasing and poetical turn of mind; the charming pages entitled *The Prairie* seem to have for their principal object the bringing forward of this natural tendency. The author has shown us in detail a part of the superstitious ideas which in Russia still stock the peasant's imagination. It is in this story that the descriptive talent of which we have spoken above is especially surprising; M. Turgénieff leads us about for a long time in the middle of one of those immense plains that are in the centre of Russia, and we follow him without feeling the slightest fatigue. Finally, no one is ignorant of the fact that the Russian peasant is distinguished by a true passion for music. This last trait of character has furnished the author with one of his best studies; it is entitled *The Singers*, and, as its title indicates, we are present at a rustic concert that is full of interest.

After glancing through the stories that I have just noticed, the reader doubtless cannot help recognizing M. Turgéniéff's talent; but he would have a very incomplete idea of the Russian people, for in all these studies the author devotes himself only to present his subject in the quarters most likely to awaken our sympathy. The Russian peasant offers others that cool off this feeling. There are often in villages men whom Providence seems to hold in reserve to punish some day the obstinate partisan of serfdom; such are, among others, two peasants with whom we become acquainted at the beginning of the book in the stories entitled *Birouk* and *Fermolai and the Miller's Wife*. In the first the dark merciless man whom the author has described is rapidly sketched, but the fantastic personage who figures in the second is studied with a great deal of care. Among the traits that distinguish the latter there is one that unfortunately is general among the Russian people—that of scorn, a contempt for women that renders their lot the sadder. That should not surprise us; on the contrary, we should be surprised that oppression and misery have not communicated to the Russian peasant a great want of sociability; he doubtless owes it to the beliefs that Christianity has developed in his uncultivated mind.

But I must stop, for it would be necessary to cite nearly all the stories of this collection; there is not one that is not at once instructive and interesting. We are indebted to the author for some other stories and several plays that have been received with favor; but the *Récits d'un Chasseur* are still the most beautiful jewel of his literary crown, and up to the present time, I repeat, no writer has depicted the Russian peasant with more talent and truth.

H. DELAVEAU.

THE ANNALS OF A SPORTSMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE BURGOMASTER.¹

ABOUT fifty *verstes*² from my country place lives a young proprietor of my acquaintance, Arcadi Pavlitch Pénotchkiné. There is a great deal of game on his land, his house is built after the plans of a French architect, and his servants are dressed in the English fashion; he has an excellent table, and receives his guests courteously. Yet with all this one has no great desire to go to his house. He is a hard, shrewd man; he received, as is customary, an excellent education, and served in the army; he has seen something of society, and he now gives his attention with success to the management of his estates. Arcadi Pavlitch is, as he himself says, severe but just; he takes a great interest in the welfare of his serfs, and punishes them only for their good. "They need to be treated like children," he says in speaking of this; "ignorance, *mon cher, il faut prendre cela en consideration.*"³ When he finds himself put to this sad necessity, no sign of anger betrays what he feels; he does not like to raise his voice, but jerks his arm out sharply, and confines himself to saying with perfect calmness, "I have spoken to you of this before, my friend." Or again: "What possesses you, my friend? Come to your senses." But in saying this, he sets his teeth slightly and the lines about his

1. This name is given in Russia to the mayors of large villages; they are chosen from among the peasants.

2. The *verste* is about an eighth of a mile.

3. All the French phrases retained in the text are in French in the Russian text.

mouth contract. Arcadi Pavlitch is of medium height, his figure is fine, his features are not wanting in a certain charm, and he takes very great care of his hands and nails; his cheeks and red lips glow with health, he laughs loud and heartily, and he can, if necessary, give to his light eyes a pleasing twinkle that makes his manners still more attractive. He dresses with taste, buys French books and prints, takes the papers—although reading has no particular charm for him: it was as much as he could do to get through the *Juif-Errant*. He is an excellent card-player. In a word, Arcadi Pavlitch is one of the most accomplished seigneurs, and one of the best matches in the government; women rave over him and go into ecstasies over the elegance of his manners. But with all this, he is extremely reserved, cautious as a cat, and is never mixed up in any compromising affair; yet, on occasion, he is not above putting himself forward to the extent of contradicting a timid man so as to put him entirely out of countenance. He is a pronounced enemy of bad company, and above all dreads any breach of the usages demanded by society; notwithstanding which in moments of good humor he affects to be an epicurean. But yet he has little respect for philosophy; he calls it the vaporous food of the German intellect, and at times even treats it as insipid trash. He is familiar with music; while playing cards, he often sings in a low voice with much expression; he knows by heart a few passages from *Lucia* and *Sonnambula*, but he generally pitches them a little too high. He passes his winters at Petersburg. His house in town, as well as his house in the country, is kept with the greatest care; the influence that he has on his servants in this respect is so great that even his coachmen feel it: not only do they take the greatest care of the harness and clean their own clothes, but they wash their faces. It is true that all his *dvorovi*¹ generally have rather a surly look; however, one must not judge anything by that, for it is almost impossible, as every one knows, to make out in our dear country whether it is rancor or sleep that troubles the features of a servant. Arcadi Pavlitch speaks in a sweet though shrill voice; he pronounces slowly, and seems to confide the words

1. Domestic serfs taken from among the peasants. They form a class by themselves, receive board and wages, and are deprived of the portion of land that they own as peasants. They are dressed like Europeans. This class, or rather this caste, dates from a long distance back; the descendant of a *dvorovi* never goes back to his former condition. They are the proletaries of Russia.

that he speaks to his fine perfumed mustaches with satisfaction. In conversation he makes use on every occasion of a great number of French expressions—as, for example, *Mais c'est impayable! Mais comment donc!* etc. Whatever the reason may be, I repeat it, one does not care to go to his house; and as for me, I do so almost with reluctance; it is very likely that if it had not been for his partridges and grouse I should have had nothing to do with him. When you enter his house a strange restlessness comes over you; all the conveniences there are comfortless. When a servant comes to you in the evening, curled and in light blue livery, with a crest on the buttons, and applies himself with the greatest zeal to taking off your boots, instead of his pale, thin face you would like to see the large cheek-bones and flat nose of a young rustic just taken away from the plough by his master, but who has already had time to rip the seams of his nankeen *kaftan*¹ that has just been put on him: this change would cause you inexpressible pleasure, and you would willingly run the risk of having your feet wrenched by the awkwardness of this improvised valet.

Notwithstanding my dislike of Arcadi Pavlitch, I once chanced to pass the night with him. The next day, at dawn, I ordered my carriage; but he would not let me go away without breakfasting *à l'anglaise*, and he took me to his own room. Tea, chops, boiled eggs, butter, honey, cheese, etc., were brought in. Two footmen, whose gloves were of an irreproachable whiteness, waited on us in silence and with great skill and attention; they divined our slightest wish. We were seated on a divan like Persians. Arcadi Pavlitch wore long silk trousers, a black velvet jacket, a handsome fez with a dark blue tassel, and his yellow Chinese slippers were without heels. He drank tea, laughed, examined his nails, smoked, leaned carelessly back on the cushions that were about him, and seemed in every respect to be in the best of humors. After he had eaten with a good appetite and evident satisfaction, he poured out a glass of red wine and put it to his lips; but his face immediately darkened.

“Why was not this wine warmed?” he asked, in rather an abrupt tone, of one of the footmen.

The footman was confused, stood still as if he had been suddenly petrified, and became very pale.

1. A long frock-coat without buttons.

"It seems to me I asked you a question, my friend," added Arcadi Pavlitch calmly, looking fixedly at him.

The unfortunate footman moved uneasily, but without leaving his place, twisted mechanically between his fingers the napkin that he held, and did not utter a word.

Arcadi Pavlitch bowed his head, glanced at the guilty man, and seemed to reflect.

"*Pardon, mon cher,*" he soon said to me with a gracious smile, placing his hand in a friendly way on my knee; then he again looked at the footman. "Well, then, go!" he said to him after a moment's silence; and resuming his usual expression, he rang.

A thick-set man, with swarthy complexion, black hair and retreating forehead, and eyes swimming in fat, appeared before us.

"Let them make then necessary preparations—for Theodore," said Arcadi Pavlitch, in a low voice and a perfectly easy manner.

"You shall be obeyed," answered the large man, and he disappeared.

"*Voilà, mon cher, les désagrémens de la campagne,*" Arcadi Pavlitch remarked gayly. "But where are you going? Stay here a little longer."

"No," I replied; "it is time for me to go."

"Always shooting! Ah! sportsmen are really terrible. But which way are you going now?"

"Forty verstes from here, to Rébova."

"To Rébova? Ah! but in that case I will go with you. Rébova is only five verstes from my country place of Chipilofka, where I have not been for a long time; I have not been able to find a moment's time for that. But this is just the thing. You can shoot all day, and return in the evening to my house. *Ce sera charmant*; I will take a cook, we will sup together, and you shall sleep at Chipilofka. That's the idea! that's the idea!" he added, without waiting an answer. "*C'est arrangé.* Hey! who's there? Let them hitch up the carriage, and as quickly as possible. You have never been to Chipilofka? I should scruple to ask you to pass the night there in my Burgomaster's house, where I usually stay; but I know that you are not hard to please, and besides at Rébova you would have to sleep just the same in the barn on the hay. Let us be off! let us be off!" and Arcadi Pavlitch sang some French song or other.

"Perhaps you don't know," he resumed, swaying from

side to side, "that my peasants are *à l'abrok*;¹ how can it be helped? Yet they pay me very regularly. A long time ago, I admit, I would have put them under feudal service, but the village has too little land for that. I am astonished that they could ever make both ends meet; but *c'est leur affaire*. I have yonder a Burgomaster who is a fine fellow! *une forte tête*. He is really a man of executive ability; you shall see for yourself. Ah! really, this is very opportune."

There was nothing to be done. Instead of starting out immediately, we were not on our way before two in the afternoon. Sportsmen will understand my disappointment. At times Arcadi Pavlitch liked, as he himself said, to take his ease. Consequently he took such a quantity of linen, clothes, perfumes, cushions, and necessaries of every kind as would have lasted an economical German for more than a year. Every time we went down hill he spoke shortly, but sharply, to his coachman, from which I thought I had a right to conclude that my dear neighbor was a great coward. Yet the journey came to an end very happily; the only accident that happened had no disagreeable consequences. One of the hind wheels of the *téléga*² which carried the cook broke through a bridge that had just been repaired, this important personage receiving a slight blow in the stomach. When Arcadi Pavlitch saw the danger that *Carême*, the cook, ran, he was really frightened, and sent to find out whether he had hurt his hand; but as the answer that was brought him completely reassured him as to this, he resumed his usual placidity. We went along somewhat slowly, and towards the end of our journey I felt extremely tired; I sat at Arcadi Pavlitch's side, and at the end of an hour's conversation he took up liberalism, for want of a better subject.

We at last came to Chipilofka and not to Rébova; the coachman did not know how it happened. But it was already too late to shoot that day, and I made up my mind willingly or unwillingly to endure my lot with resignation.

The cook, who had arrived a few moments before us, had had time to make all the necessary arrangements, and inform all who could have any interest in it of our arrival.

As we entered the village we met the *Starosta*³ (the Burgomaster's son); he was a sturdy peasant, with red hair,

1. An annual rent that varies according to the time and frees the peasants from all manual labor to their lord's profit.

2. A very light four-wheeled cart.

3. A title inferior to that of Burgomaster.

and of gigantic height. He was waiting for us on his horse, his hat off, and arrayed in a new *armiak*¹ that had no belt.

"Where is Safrone?" asked Pavlitch.

The enormous Starosta jumped to the ground, and bowing profoundly to his master, said to him, "Good-day, my father Arcadi Pavlitch;" then drawing himself up to his full height, and throwing back his hair by a shake of the head, he added that Safrone had gone to Pétrova, but that he had been sent for.

"Well, then, follow us," Arcadi Pavlitch said to him; and we started off.

The Starosta drew up his horse by the side of the road out of respect to us, jumped on its back, and began to follow our carriage at a full trot, but with his hat still in his hand. While going through the village we met several peasants with empty *télégas*; their legs hung out of these rustic vehicles, the jolting of which made them bounce in the air every minute; they were returning from work and singing at the top of their voices. But as soon as they saw our carriage and the Starosta they became silent, took off their fur hats (though it was midsummer), and rose up as if they were waiting for orders. Arcadi Pavlitch bowed to them in a dignified manner as we passed. An unaccustomed stir soon spread throughout the village. The peasant-women in striped skirts were throwing sticks at the dogs who were so zealous, or so undiscerning, as to welcome us with their barkings. A lame old man, whose white beard grew almost to his eyes, hastily took away from the drinking-fountain a horse that he had just led there who was not yet through drinking, and, after kicking him in the side without the slightest cause, greeted us. Children in long shirts² ran off howling as we came up, and lay down flat on their stomachs upon the door-sills, lowered their heads, raised their feet in the air, and in this posture slid to the bottom of the dark *sénis*³ of their respective houses, which they did not leave again. Even the chickens fled into the yards. A cock with a black breast shining like a satin waistcoat, and a scarlet tail floating in the breeze, was the only living being

1. A long cloth great-coat peculiar to the peasants.

2. All summer in the villages the children only wear (straight) shirts, gathered in at the waist by a narrow belt, and go barefooted.

3. A cool room without windows, and which takes the place of the ante-chamber in the houses of the Russian peasants. The door-sill is generally very high.

that had had the audacity to remain in the road as we approached, and he was even preparing to crow, when suddenly he became disturbed and took to flight in his turn.

The Burgomaster's house was by itself, in the middle of an enclosure sown with hemp, then in full growth. The carriage stopped before the door. Pénotchkiné arose, and with a very picturesque movement letting the cloak that was thrown over his shoulders slip off, he alighted, looking benevolently about him. The Burgomaster's wife came towards us with many bows and put her lips to the seignorial hand. Arcadi Pavlitch let her cover it with kisses, and then walked down the steps. The Starosta's wife was squatting in a dark corner on the floor of the front room; she bowed to her master, but did not dare to kiss his hand. In the summer-chamber,¹ which was to the right of that in which we were, two other peasants were busy putting the place in order in great haste; they took from it a lot of rubbish, empty jars, *touloupes*² with skin hardened by long usage, butter-pots, and a cradle full of different-colored rags, holding a nursing infant; they swept up the dirt that covered the floor with the bundle of branches that they used in the bath.³ Arcadi Pavlitch sent them away and sat down on the bench near the *images*.⁴ The coachmen began to bring in the trunks, the money-boxes, and other objects, trying to make as little noise as possible with their heavy boots.

During this time Arcadi Pavlitch was asking the Starosta about the crops and other things that appertained to agricultural economy. The Starosta's answers were satisfactory, but his manner was awkward and embarrassed; one would have imagined that he was trying to button his kaftan in the middle of winter with fingers numb from cold. He stood near the door and kept turning his head as if afraid something would happen to him; he also took a great deal of interest in the incessant comings and goings of the footmen. Though he almost entirely hid the door from me, I saw behind him, in the front room, the Burgomaster's wife, who was belaboring another peasant. But soon a noise of wheels was heard, and a *téléga* stopped before the house: the Burgomaster came into the room.

1. A summer apartment, generally adjoining the winter one, or at least under the same roof.

2. A sheep-skin pelisse.

3. The Russian peasants whip themselves in their baths with little bundles of branches covered with leaves.

4. Place of honor in peasants' houses.

This administrator, as Arcadi Pavlitch called him, was short, but his shoulders were broad, and though his hair was gray, he was still in his prime; his nose was red, his eyes were a grayish blue, and his beard was huge. Here I must make the following observation: Since Russia has existed, those who have become rich wear an immense beard. Some peasant whom we know has rather a scanty beard; some fine day we meet him and notice with amazement that his face is encircled with a veritable halo. Where does this ornament come from?

The Burgomaster seemed to have enjoyed himself very much at Pétrova; he exhaled a decided odor of brandy, and his face was somewhat bloated.

"Ah! you our fathers, our benefactors," he began to exclaim in a high drawling voice, giving such a keen expression of tenderness to his face that he seemed on the point of shedding a torrent of tears,—“then you have condescended to come and see us! Your little hand, my father, your dear hand!” he added, putting out his lips eagerly.

Arcadi Pavlitch hastened to gratify this proof of attachment.

“Well, father Safrone, how are things getting on?” he then asked the Burgomaster in almost a caressing tone.

“Ah! father,” he replied, “how could they go badly? Are you not our fathers, our benefactors? You have deigned to honor our poor village with your presence; you have filled us with happiness for the rest of our days, God be praised! Arcadi Pavlitch; God be praised! Everything goes well, thanks to your kindness.”

After saying this, Safrone became silent and remained quiet for a moment, his eyes fixed on his master; but a new burst of feeling (which became more and more maudlin) took possession of him; he began to kiss Arcadi Pavlitch's hands more than ever, and then resumed in the same tone,

“Ah! very merciful fathers—and—what more? May God forgive me, but I really think joy is making me mad. Yes, I take God to witness, I can't believe my eyes. Ah! fathers.”

Arcadi Pavlitch cast a meaning glance at me, smiled, and said, “*N'est ce pas que c'est touchant?*”

“But, my father Arcadi Pavlitch,” continued the irrepressible Burgomaster, “why were you not pleased to inform me of your coming? I am in despair. Where will you pass the night? Everything here is out of order, full of dirt.”

"That's no matter, Safrone; that's no matter," answered Arcadi Pavlitch with a smile. "It's all right here."

"Yes, for us peasants," said Safrone; "but for you? Ah! you our fathers, our benefactors!"

But in the mean while supper was brought in. Arcadi Pavlitch sat down to the table. Safrone sent away his son, telling him he tainted the air.

"Well, have you finished the surveys, my old fellow?" Pénotchkine asked him, trying to imitate the peasant's talk; and he looked at me with a satisfied air.

"The surveys are all done, my father," answered Safrone, "thanks to your kindness. Three days ago the contract was signed. The Klinovas at first did not like it; yes, they did not like it at all. They demanded—they demanded—God knows what! But they are a lot of fools, my father; those people are silly. As to us, my father, thanks to your goodness, we are all through, and we have *thanked*¹ Nicolaï Nikolaitch, the surveyor. Still conforming to your orders, father; that is, paying Egor Dmitrich."

"Egor told me of it," said Pénotchkine in consequential tones. "Now, then, are you satisfied?"

"Ah! you our fathers, our benefactors!" suddenly cried Safrone, who had been waiting for this question some time, "why should we not be? We pray to God for you night and day. There is no doubt the village has not enough land—"

"All right, all right, Safrone," said Pénotchkine, interrupting him; "I know you are a faithful servant. And the thrashing, how is that getting on?"

"The thrashing, father, I must admit," replied Safrone, uttering a deep sigh, "has not come to much. But, Arcadi Pavlitch, let me tell you something that happened to us;" and here, with his arms apart, he came towards his master, and bending his head, he said to him, shutting one eye, "A dead body has been found on our land."

"What's that?" said Pénotchkine quickly.

"I know nothing about it myself, my good father; the devil doubtless has a hand in it. But fortunately the body, though on our land, was very near our boundaries. I immediately ordered them to drag it into our neighbor's field before it was too late. Then I put a watch there, and said to our people, 'Say nothing about it! I order it!' Moreover

1. This means in Russia that money and presents are given to government agents.

I then explained it all to the *stanavoi*,¹ treating him to tea, and then as was right I *thanked* him. Would you believe it, father? The blame was laid on others, and a dead body is not a small affair, as you know; it cost at least two hundred roubles, as true as you must pay five kopeks for a *kalatch*."²

Pénotchkine was very much pleased with the skill the Burgomaster had shown about this, and repeated to me several times, "*Quel gaillard! hein?*"

But it was already night. Arcadi Pavlitch ordered the table to be cleared, and hay to be brought. The footmen spread out the bedclothes, put the pillows in place, and we went to bed. Safrone also withdrew, after he had taken his master's orders for the next day. As he was falling asleep, Pénotchkine again recurred to the excellent qualities of the Russian peasant, and recalled the fact that since the day Safrone had been appointed Burgomaster the peasants of Chipilofka had regularly paid their rent.—The watchman struck on his *planche*,³ a child not yet old enough to be imbued with the respect due his lord began to cry somewhere about the house: we soon fell asleep.

The next morning we awoke quite early. I was getting ready to go to Rébova, but Arcadi Pavlitch insisted that I should see his property; and as I was not sorry to examine for myself the merits of this model administrator who governed the village, I consented to go with him. The Burgomaster appeared; he had on a blue *armiak* and a red *kouchack*.⁴ He was not so talkative as the night before; he looked attentively at his master, and answered his questions with much tact and intelligence. We went with him to the thrashing-floor; his son, the gigantic Starosta, who from all appearances was a man of shallow mind, joined us, with the *zemskoi*⁵ Fédocéitch, a retired soldier with an enormous pair of mustaches and the strangest face imaginable: one would have thought that he had once had a terrible fright, and that he was still laboring under the effects of it.

We visited the thrashing-floor, the drying-rooms, the barns, the windmill, the poultry-yards, the orchards, and the

1. Police officer of the district.

2. Very soft white bread, and very popular in the country.

3. In the villages, and even in the towns, the watchmen keep watch all night near the houses and seigniorial premises, and strike from time to time on a metal plate hung up.

4. A large belt of wool or silk.

5. A scribe attached to the government of an estate.

hemp-fields: everything was indeed in perfect order. I was somewhat surprised, however, at the sad and downcast look of all the peasants whom we came across. Yet Safrone had not entirely sacrificed the ornamental to the useful: all the streams were lined with willows, and little paths well sanded were marked out in the thrashing-floor between the stacks. He had had put on the mill a weathercock which represented a bear with his mouth open and a long fiery-red tongue; and on the gray pediment that he had added to the body of the stable-buildings were these words traced in lime: "Built in the village of Chipilofka, in the year one thousand eight hundred and forty; this farm-yard." Arcadi Pavlitch was delighted; he began to explain in French the advantages that the system of rents offered, without denying, however, that that of feudal services was yet more profitable for the lord. "But what can be done?" He then tried to give the Burgomaster advice as to the way in which potatoes should be planted, the care that was necessary about cattle-food, etc. Safrone listened attentively to his master, but did not always approve of what he said, and did not call him father or benefactor; on the contrary, very often he recurred to the small amount of land that the village owned, and added that it would be a good thing to buy some more.

"Well, then, buy some," Arcadi Pavlitch said at last, "but in my name; I have no objection to it."

The Burgomaster did not answer, but stroked his beard.

"Now let us go and see the woods," said Pénotchkine.

Saddle-horses were immediately brought us, and we started off in their direction. The woods were extremely thick; Pénotchkine complimented Safrone on them, and even tapped him in a friendly manner on the shoulder. He stuck to the old ideas of the country with respect to the growing of woods; and about this he told me what he thought one of the best of jokes, that a wag of a proprietor dared to tear out half of his forester's beard in order to show him that cutting did not make woods thicker. Yet Safrone and his master were not pronounced enemies against all innovations. When we went back to the village, the Burgomaster took us to see a sieve that had just come from Moscow. This machine did its work very effectually; but if Safrone could have foreseen the disagreeable consequences that awaited him and his master from this last visit, it is likely that he would have spared us.

On leaving the barn, we saw the following sight: At a

few steps from the door two peasants were standing near a muddy pool of water in which several ducks were lazily paddling about. One was an old man of about sixty, the other a boy of twenty. They wore thick linen shirts¹ made in the village; a cord served as a belt, and they were barefooted.

The zemskoi Fédocéitch walked about them with an anxious air, and it is probable that he might have induced them to go away if we had been a little longer in looking at the sieve. But as soon as he saw us he took the position of an unarmed soldier, and never left it. The Starosta was also at the side of the two peasants; his mouth was open and his fists clenched, but he seemed undecided as to what he should do. Arcadi Pavlitch frowned, bit his lip, and approached the peasants; they threw themselves at his feet.

"What do you wish of me? What is all this about?" he asked them in a severe and nasal voice.

The peasants looked at each other without saying a word; but they blinked their eyes a little, as one does when the sun is too bright, and breathed quickly.

"Well, what is it?" repeated Arcadi Pavlitch in the same tone, and he turned to the Burgomaster. "To what family do they belong?"

"To the Toboleffs," answered the Burgomaster slowly.

"Well, what do you wish of me?" resumed Pénotchkiné. "Have you no tongue, hey? Answer. What do you want?" he continued, looking at the old man. "Come! don't be afraid, fool."

The old man stretched out his long wrinkled sun-burnt neck; his pale lips contracted, and he answered in a hoarse voice, "Protect us, seigneur," and again threw himself on the ground, striking it with his forehead. The young peasant followed his example. Arcadi Pavlitch fixed his glance on their necks with a dignified air, threw his head back, and spread his legs apart.

"What is it? Of whom do you complain?"

"Have pity on us, seigneur. Allow us to live. We are ruined." The old man expressed himself with difficulty.

"Who has ruined you?"

"Safrone Jakovlitch, my father."

Arcadi Pavlitch was silent. "What is your name?"

"Antipe, my good father."

1. The peasants when in the village wear a linen or calico shirt held in by a belt.

"And he, who is he?"

"My son."

Arcadi Pavlitch was again silent for a few moments, but his lips trembled. "How has he ruined you?" he at last said, curling his mustache.

"My father," resumed the old man, "he has utterly ruined us. He has already made two of my sons soldiers, out of turn,¹ and he now wishes to take away the third. Yesterday, my father, he took from our yard the last two cows we had, and beat my poor wife. That is what his grace was pleased to do!" And while saying these words, the old man pointed at the Starosta.

"Hey?" said Arcadi Pavlitch.

"Do not let him ruin us entirely; you are our foster-father."

Pénotchkine's face became very dark. "Indeed, what does this mean?" he asked the Burgomaster in a slow voice, and in a tone that showed a secret discontent.

"He is a drunkard," said the Burgomaster respectfully, "an idler; his rent is five years in arrears."

"Safrone Jakovlitch helped me with what I wanted to pay it; that was five years ago, and ever since he has obliged me to work on his account—and besides—"

"And why were you not able to pay your rent?" answered Pénotchkine in a threatening voice. The old man hung his head. "You are fond of drink? You hang about taverns?" The old man was about to speak. "I know you," continued Pénotchkine with heat; "your business is to drink and to lie stretched out over the stove;² good peasants are obliged to be responsible for you, and you let them do it."

"And what is more, he is insolent," added the Burgomaster, trying to outdo his master.

"That's not strange," said Pénotchkine; "it is always so. I have noticed that more than once. They give themselves up to debauchery all the year, and then they come and crawl at your feet."

"My good father Arcadi Pavlitch," cried the old man in a tone of despair, "have pity on me; defend me! I inso-

1. In every village all the families liable to enlistment are enrolled in a determined order, and only furnish soldiers to the state in their turn; the peasants look on the non-observance of this order as a great injustice.

2. The Russian peasants lie, in winter, on a little platform that is put above the stove a few feet from the ceiling.

lent? We can stand it no longer. It is as true as if I spoke in God's presence. Safrone Jakovlitch has taken an aversion to me; and why? May the Lord God be the judge of it! he has crushed us. This is my last son; and him also he wishes—"Tears glistened in the old man's half-closed eyes. "Have pity on us, all-powerful master, defend us!"

"And we are not the only ones whom he has crushed," said the young man.

But Arcadi Pavlitch did not give him time to finish; he replied impetuously: "And you, who spoke to you, eh? No one spoke to you; be silent! What does he mean to say? Silence, I tell you, silence. Ah! great heavens! But this is simply rebellion. No, no, brother, I am not the one to be defied." Arcadi Pavlitch made a step forward; but, doubtless remembering that I was present, he drew back and put his hands in his pockets. "*Je vous demande bien pardon, mon cher,*" he added with a strained smile, turning to me; and in a lower voice, "*C'est le revers de la médaille.* Come, that will do," he added without looking at the peasants; "I will give orders. That will do; go."

The peasants did not move.

"I have just told you, it seems to me, that will do. Come, now. I will give my orders; they will be repeated to you." After saying this, Arcadi Pavlitch turned his back to them. "Nothing but disagreeable things!" he said between his teeth, and he strode towards the house. Safrone followed him; the zemskoi kept his eyes fixed before him, as if he was getting ready to make a perilous leap. The Starosta drove away the ducks that were still paddling about the pool. The two suppliants still remained a few moments in the same place; then, looking about them, went slowly towards the village.

About two hours later I was at Rébova, and was getting ready to go shooting with Anpadiste, a peasant whom I knew. I began to talk with him about the peasants of Chipilofka, about Pénotchkiné, and asked him if he knew the Burgomaster of the village.

"Safrone Jakovlitch? I should think so."

"What kind of man is he?"

"He is not a man; he is a dog, and a dog such as you will not find from here to Kursk."

"How's that?"

"The land of Chipilofka only belongs nominally to—how

did you just call him?—to Pénotchkine. Safrone, he alone is the master.”

“Is it possible?”

“He does as he pleases with his own. All the peasants are his debtors; he makes them work on his account like day-laborers. He sends some of them to one place, some to another. He has entirely crushed them.”

“They have not much land, I have heard.”

“Well, Safrone Jakovlitch rents more than eighty *décia-tines*¹ from the peasants of Klinova, and one hundred and twenty from others, without counting the rest—there is already more than two hundred. But he does not draw profit from the soil only; he also deals in horses, cattle, tar, oil, hemp, and a great many other things besides. How rich the brute is! But the worst of it is that he beats them. He is a ferocious beast and not a man, as you have heard; a real dog.”

“But why don't the peasants carry their complaints against him to their lord?”

“Indeed! But what does it matter to the master? There are no arrears; he don't care for the rest. Ah! why yes,” he resumed after reflecting for a moment; “I advise them to make a complaint! ah! he—yes; I advise them. Ah! as you say, he—”

I remembered Antipe, and told him of the scene I had just witnessed.

“Ah, well,” answered Anpadiste, “he will ruin him. He will ruin that man without pity. The Starosta will beat him to death. Ah! how stupid he is! Can you imagine such a thing?—the unfortunate man! And why does he suffer so much? I will tell you. He had a dispute one day with the Burgomaster at a gathering of peasants. Since then he has had a grudge against him. A fine business! From that time he began to worry Antipe; now he is about to make an end of him. He is a dog; may God forgive me! He knows well whom to attack; he does not touch the rich old men who have large families. He spares them, the bald-headed devil! But the others, he falls on them without pity. The miserable wretch! He has already taken two of Antipe's sons before their turn; the pitiless man! He is a true dog; may God forgive me!”

We started off on our way.

1. The *décia-tine* is a little more than two hectares (a hectare is 2 acres & 1 rood 35 perches).

CHAPTER II.

JERMOLAÏ AND THE MILLER'S WIFE.

ONE evening Jermolaï and I started out stand-shooting. But possibly the reader does not know what this term means. I will explain it in a few words.

About a quarter of an hour before sunset, in the spring, you go into the woods, without a dog, and your gun over your shoulder. After choosing a suitable place on the edge of a clearing, you take your position; thus posted, you look about in every direction, examine your caps, and from time to time exchange a look of intelligence with your companion. A quarter of an hour passes by. The sun has already set, but it is not yet dark in the woods; the air is clear and transparent; the birds, vying with each other, twitter about you; the tender grass sparkles like an emerald. You wait. The day begins to fade rapidly; the reddish fires that light the horizon fall gently upon the roots and trunks of the trees; then, mounting little by little, they color the lower branches loaded with buds half open, and at last reach their motionless tops that seem to be dozing. But they die out in their turn. The heavens, purple up to that time, become bluer and bluer. The air is impregnated with the fragrant perfume that the woods give out at this hour of the day; a light breeze, damp and scarcely perceptible, breathes at intervals, and dies away near you in the branches. The birds go to sleep one after the other: the finches are the first to become quiet; a few moments after, the warblers; then the wit-walts. Darkness comes on apace; the trees become to the eye confused and gigantic masses; a few stars twinkle timidly in the vault of heaven; most of the birds are sleeping. The red-starts and the young woodpeckers are the only ones that still whistle, but they become silent in their turn. The loud little song of the pewits is heard for the last time above your head; the plaintive cry of the oriole answers it in the distance; at the bottom of the woods a nightingale

has just given forth its first note. Impatience takes possession of you. Suddenly,—but a sportsman alone can understand me,—in the midst of the deep silence that has reigned the last few moments, a peculiar noise arises: it is the sound of wings rapidly moving together, and a woodcock, with its long beak gracefully inclined, flies out of the dark foliage of a birch and comes slowly towards you.

That is what is understood by stand-shooting. Thus I started out with Jermolai to go shooting. But I forgot one important thing: I have yet, dear reader, to introduce you to my companion.

Picture to yourself a man of about five-and-forty, with a high narrow forehead and a long sharp nose. Add to these gray eyes, bristly hair, and a scornful smile perpetually playing over his thick lips. This strange person wears at all seasons a yellowish nankeen kaftan, cut after the German fashion, and clasped at the loins by a kouchack; large blue trousers, and a hat trimmed with sheep-skin: a neighboring proprietor had made him a present of this fine head-dress in a fit of good-humor. Two bags hung at his belt, one in front, the other behind; the first was tied so as to form two compartments nearly of the same size, to hold his powder and shot; the second was for game. For wadding he simply plunged his hand into his hat, which, in this respect, seemed really to be an inexhaustible mine. The idea of buying a game-bag or a powder-flask with the money he got from the sale of the game never occurred to him; he had always loaded his gun with the accoutrements we have just described, and, to the great astonishment of those who looked on at the operation, he did it without spilling a single grain of shot or powder. His gun was single-barrelled and a flint-lock; moreover, it kicked in such a manner that Jermolai's right cheek had become a great deal larger than his left. With such a gun any one else would never have hit a single piece of game; but Jermolai seldom missed his aim. Moreover, he owned a pointer, and this strange animal bore the name of Valetka. His master never thought of feeding him. "I feed a dog!" he would say to this. "Come, now; they are intelligent animals; they can feed themselves." And indeed, although Valetka aroused compassion in the most indifferent passer-by by his frightful leanness, he lived and lived a long time. However sad his lot, he never happened to be lost, nor did he show the slightest desire to desert his master. Once only, in his youth, he had disappeared for two entire days;

but this period of folly was of short duration. What especially characterized Valetka was a complete indifference to everything in the world; if the word could be applied to a dog, I should say that he was *blasé*. He had a habit of sitting on his hind legs, frowning, with his tail curled under him; from time to time his legs twitched nervously. But his emaciated face never brightened (dogs, as every one knows, can sometimes smile, and often with much charm). Poor Valetka's appearance was therefore not very prepossessing; he was also perpetually the butt for the exasperating jokes of all the idle servants: but although these disagreeable remarks were often accompanied by blows, Valetka bore them with an imperturbable coolness. This was especially the case in regard to scullions with whom he had a bone to pick; when, as often happens and to creatures of a higher order, he was so weak as to poke his nose into the half-open door of the kitchen to sniff the warm scented air, a scullion never failed to leave his stove and pursue the unfortunate Valetka into the yard with loud shouts. Valetka was indefatigable while hunting, and had rather a good nose; but every time that he ran down a wounded hare, he devoured it with delight in some out-of-the-way corner, in the shade under a thick bush, without leaving a morsel; and always, be it understood, at a respectful distance from Jermolai, who at such times never failed to apostrophize him unsparingly, in all possible dialects; he often even invented terms for the occasion.

Jermolai belonged to one of my neighbors, a man of the old school. Proprietors of this class do not care for game in general; they prefer the domestic fowl. But nevertheless they depart from this rule on certain occasions, as for example on fête-days and birthdays, or at election-time.¹ The cooks of the seigneurs in question then proceed to the culinary preparation of woodcock and other long-beaked birds. Impelled by the feverish emotion that takes possession of a Russian when he finds himself in a predicament, they manage to prepare dishes with such seasonings that the guests do not venture to do them honor but confine themselves to examining them with curiosity. Jermolai was obliged to bring every month a few pairs of grouse for the seignorial table; otherwise he was allowed to go free

1. The elections to different posts that the nobility are called on to fill; they take place every three years.

wherever he wished, and to provide for his living as he liked ; they generally troubled themselves very little about him.

His master never thought of furnishing him with a little shot and powder, without which it was impossible for him to fulfil his duty ; he followed, in this respect, the course that our hunter himself pursued with his dog. Jermolai had a very strange character ; he was as thoughtless as a bird, and rather unreserved, but apparently absent-minded and awkward ; he liked to take a drop, was very restless, and though his walk was heavy and clumsy, if necessary he could do his sixty verstes in twenty-four hours. He exposed himself willingly to the most varied adventures : he would pass the night in a swamp, on a tree, on a roof, under a bridge, and even shut up in a cellar or in a shed ; lose his gun, his dog, the most indispensable part of his clothes ; be beaten with violence and for a long time. But whatever might befall him, he would reappear at the end of a certain time at the house, dressed as usual, with his gun and his dog. One could not say that his disposition was cheerful, yet he was generally well enough disposed ; it was, in short, with reason that he was treated as eccentric. He was very fond of drinking with some boon companion of his acquaintance, but he never let the interview last very long ; at the end of a certain time Jermolai usually arose and left his companion without ceremony.

"Where the devil are you going ? It is getting dark."

"To Tchapilino."

"Why must you drag yourself to Tchapilino ? It is ten good verstes from here."

"I am going to pass the night at Safrone the peasant's."

"Why not stay here ?"

"Oh, I can't."

And Jermolai started off with Valetka through the dark night, the brushwood and the swamps. On reaching Safrone's, however, he was not always welcome, and at times was received with blows in order to teach him better manners than to come to disturb honest people at such an hour. But to do him justice, it must be added no one could compete with Jermolai in fishing, in the spring, in the fresh-water streams, in catching crabs in his hand and quails by bird-call, taming hawks, scenting out game, and ferreting out nightingales with *flageolet du diable* or with the *trait du coucou*.¹ There was

1. Names that lovers give to certain rare cadences of the nightingale.

but one thing he could not do: it was impossible for him to break a dog for want of patience. Jermolai was married; he went once a week to see his wife, who lived in a half-ruined hut and in misery, without knowing from day to day whether she would have enough to eat. The lot of this unfortunate creature was very sad. Jermolai, though indifferent in general, was not wanting in humanity for his fellow-creatures; but to his wife he was rough and even extremely hard; when he entered his house, his face became dark and threatening; his wife, who trembled like a leaf at sight of him, did all she could to be agreeable to him, and robbed herself of her last kopek to buy him brandy; and when he stretched out on the stove and fell into a profound sleep she covered him over tenderly with her own touloupe. I had often noticed in him an indication of ferocious cruelty; the expression that came over his features when, in order to finish a wounded bird, he bit it, had always impressed me. Yet Jermolai never passed more than one day at home, and once away he resumed that air of good-nature that had obtained for him the familiar nickname of Jermolka (little calotte), at which he did not seem to take offence, for on occasions he so called himself. The meanest of the *dvorovi* considered himself superior to this vagabond, and that perhaps is why they were friendly to him. As to the peasants, at first they had often chased him across the fields like a hare, but they soon gave it up, and let him wander about at will in God's hands. When they knew Jermolai better, they no longer annoyed him in any way; they even gave him a piece of bread and willingly talked with him about his wandering habits. Such was the companion whom I took to go shooting with in the great birch woods that stretched along the banks of the *Ista*.

You meet with a great many rivers in Russia of which one bank is very steep and the other almost level with the water. The *Ista* is of this kind. This little river winds gracefully through the middle of a plain; it does not run a *verste* in a straight line, and there is one point on its course where, when you are above it on a high mound, it stretches out before you ten *verstes* at least, with mills, and ponds that feed it, dams that stop its waters, and orchards surrounded by willows, and flocks of geese that are scattered over its banks. Fish abound there; especially mullet, that the peasants catch in their hands under the bushes, during the hot weather. Little curlews fly whistling along its stony banks, down which run here and there springs of cold, clear water

wild ducks suddenly appear in the middle of the ponds and look attentively about them; cranes perch at the bottom of the creeks, under the shadows of the bank.

At the end of an hour we had killed two brace of woodcock. We decided to give up shooting until the first break of dawn—for one can shoot from the stand just as well in the morning as in the evening—and go pass the night in the nearest mill. We left the wood and came to the river-bank. The waters of the Ista were dark blue; the clouds of vapor that hovered on its surface grew more and more dense. We knocked at a door, and a prolonged barking arose at the bottom of the yard.

"Who is there?" called a hoarse, sleepy voice.

"Hunters. Can we pass the night here?" There was no answer. "We are willing to pay."

"I will tell my master," replied the speaker. "Be quiet, you cursed beast! May the devil take you!"

We heard the workman go back into the house. He returned a few minutes after, and approached the door.

"No," he said to us; "the master will not let you come in."

"Why so?"

"He is afraid. You are hunters: who knows? you might set the mill on fire. You have so many things with you."

"What nonsense!"

"Last year our mill was burned even without that. Fish-curers slept here, and it seems that they set fire to it, God knows how."

"But we cannot pass the night in the open air."

"Do as you like." And the workman went away. We heard the noise of his steps re-echoing in the yard.

Jermolai wished any number of disagreeable things. "Let us go to the village," he then said with a sigh. "But to get there we must go at least ten verstes."

"Let us sleep here," I said to him in my turn; "here, in the open air. The night is warm; the miller, if we pay him well, will bring us straw."

Jermolai did not make the least objection, and we again knocked, harder than ever.

"What do you want now?" again cried the workman. "You were told that you could not come in."

We explained to him what we wished. He immediately went to consult his master, and returned with him. The

*kalitka*¹ creaked on its hinges, and the miller appeared. He was a tall man with face puffed with fat, a bull-neck, and a large round stomach. He agreed to my request. A little shed open on every side stood at a hundred paces from the mill; they brought us straw and hay; the workman put a *samovar*² on the grass, near the river, and stooping down, began to blow the fire with all his might: the light of the glowing coals soon completely lighted up his youthful features. The miller ran to wake his wife, and at last decided to ask me to lie under his roof. But I preferred to pass the night out of doors. The miller's wife brought us milk, eggs, potatoes, and bread. The samovar soon began to boil, and we drank our tea. Veils of mist floated along the river; the cry of the corn-crake was heard in the distance, and a confused murmur arose near the wheels of the mill: it came from the little drops that fell from the motionless buckets, and from the thin streams of water that escaped through the dam. We lighted a bundle of dry branches, and while Jermolai was busy boiling some potatoes I fell asleep. But it was not long before I was awakened by the noise of a conversation that was taking place at a little distance from me. I raised my head; the miller's wife was seated before the fire on a tub turned upside down, talking with my hunter. I thought I recognized by her dress, her manners, and her pronunciation that she belonged neither to the peasant class nor to the townspeople; she was evidently a *dvorovi*. I now looked at her more attentively. She appeared to be about thirty; her pale thin features still bore the traces of great beauty; I was above all struck with the expression of sadness in her face. She sat with her elbows on her knees, and her chin leaning on her two hands. As to Jermolai, he had turned his back to me, and was busy throwing chips on the fire.

"The plague is again at Jeltoukhino," said the miller's wife; "father Ivan's two cows died of it. God have pity on us!"

"And what have become of the swine?" asked Jermolai after a moment's silence.

"They are doing well."

"Indeed you ought to give me a little pig, at least."

The miller's wife did not answer, but she gave a deep sigh. "With whom are you?"

1. Small entrance-door beside the large one.

2. A copper tea-kettle, inside of which is a hearth.

"With the seigneur of Kostamarova." Having said this, Jermolaï threw a few pine branches on the fire; they immediately flamed up crackling, and a cloud of thick white smoke covered his face.

"Why wouldn't your husband let us into the house?"

"He was afraid."

"Just think of it, the cursed fool! My little dove, Arina Timofeïovna, bring me a glass of brandy."

The miller's wife arose and disappeared in the darkness. Jermolaï began to sing in a low voice:

"While going to see my fair one
I used up the soles of my boots."

Arina came back with a decanter and glass. Jermolaï arose, crossed himself, and tossed off at a draught the glass of brandy that the miller's wife had filled for him.

"That's good!" he said.

The miller's wife sat down again on the tub.

"Are you still ill, Arina Timofeïovna?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter with you?"

"My cough doesn't allow me a moment's rest at night."

"Methinks the master has already gone to sleep," replied Jermolaï, after a moment's silence. "Don't consult a physician, Arina; you will be the worse for it."

"That's just what I am doing."

"But come and see me."

Arina bowed her head.

"I will send away my wife on that day," continued Jermolaï. "That's what I'll do."

"You had better wake your master, Jermolaï Pétrovitch; see, the potatoes are boiled."

"Let him snore in peace," said my faithful servant calmly. "He is tired out and needs sleep."

I turned over on the hay. Jermolaï arose, and approaching me, said with the greatest coolness,

"The potatoes are ready. Will you get up to eat them?"

I left the shed. The miller's wife left her seat on seeing me, and went off to a distance. I spoke to her.

"Have you rented this mill long?"

"It will be two years Trinity Day."

"And your husband, where does he come from?"

Arina did not hear my question.

"Where does your husband come from?" repeated Jermolai with an important air, raising his voice.

"From Béléva; he is a citizen of that town."

"And you, are you from Béléva?"

"No; I belong—I belonged to a seigneur."

"Who was he?"

"M. Zverkoff. Now I am free."

"What Zverkoff?"

"Alexander Silitché."

"Were you not his wife's maid?"

"What do you know about it? Yes, I was."

I looked at Arina with redoubled interest. "I knew your master," I added.

"You knew him?" she replied in a low voice, bending down her head.

But I must tell the reader why Arina inspired me with so much compassion. At the time of my stay at Saint Petersburg I by chance made the acquaintance of M. Zverkoff. He held quite an important position, and was generally thought to be a learned man and a man of experience. He was married. His wife was remarkably stout and extremely sensitive; she wept on every occasion, yet she was very foolish and very bad. The little Zverkoff, a country squire of the worst kind, was as foolish as he was badly brought up. M. Zverkoff's appearance did not prepossess one in his favor: in the middle of his enormous face were two little bead-like eyes; his nose was long and sharp, and his nostrils open; his short gray hair stood up like a pig's bristles above a wrinkled forehead; his lips twitched convulsively, and his smile was somewhat constrained. M. Zverkoff had a habit of standing with his legs apart, and his large hands were rarely out of his trousers pockets. I once happened, I don't know why, to drive out of town with him *tête-à-tête*. We began at once to talk. Zverkoff, in his capacity of an earnest man, thought he ought to give me good advice.

"Let me give you an important piece of advice," he said to me, in his usual shrill voice; "you young people speak and judge entirely contrary to good sense. You know very little about your own country; yes, Russia, my dear sirs, is entirely strange to you. But one is not surprised at this; you read only foreign books. As, for instance, you argue a great deal about one thing and another; I mean about domestic serfs. Very well; I don't deny it, all that is very

well ; but you don't know them." And here Zverkoff blew his nose loudly and took a pinch of snuff. " Let me tell you a little anecdote regarding them," he resumed ; " perhaps it will interest you." Then, having coughed to clear his throat, Zverkoff began : " Doubtless you know what a wife I have the good fortune to possess ; I believe it to be impossible to find a better person ; you yourself will agree to that. Certainly there could not be a happier lot than that of my wife's maids ; it is truly bliss. But Madame Zverkoff has made it a rule not to have a married maid in her service ; and, indeed, it's no use ; children come, and this thing and that thing. How, I ask you, could a married maid do her duty and conform to her mistress's habits ? It's not possible ; she has other things in her head. It's human nature. As, for example, one day, in going through one of our villages, some time ago—how shall I tell you without exaggeration ?—fifteen years ago, my wife and I noticed the Starosta's daughter. She was a charming girl ; she had a something, you know, something very attractive in her manner. My wife immediately said to me, ' Coco,'—that is what she calls me, you know,—' let us take this little girl to Petersburg ; she pleases me.' ' Take her,' I answered ; ' I ask nothing better.' The Starosta fell at our feet ; he could not have dreamt, you know, of such an honor. As to the girl, she naturally began to weep—foolishness. At first there is no trouble ; the thing may appear a little hard, I agree ; the paternal roof—in general, there is nothing extraordinary in that. I still persist that it is human nature. Yet the girl soon became accustomed to us. At first they put her in the maid-servants' room to teach her, as was proper. But what will surprise you, doubtless, is that she made astonishing progress. My wife became very fond of her, and at last condescended to attach her, in preference to any other,—mark it well,—to her own person. And to do her justice, I must say that she has never yet had a better maid ; she was an obliging, modest, obedient creature ; in a word, she had all the qualities that one could desire. But you must also see to what a degree my wife spoiled her. In this respect she went much too far ; she dressed her in the very best, fed her on our dessert, made her bring tea ; finally, she gave her everything imaginable. In this way she lived a dozen years near my wife. But one fine day just imagine my astonishment at seeing Arina (that was the girl's name) come into my own room without asking my permission. Rushing

up to me, she threw herself at my feet. It is, I admit it very frankly, a habit I can't endure. A human being must never be wanting in dignity; don't you think so? 'What do you wish of me?' I asked Arina. 'My father Alexander Silitché, I come to ask a favor of you.' 'What is it?' 'Allow me to marry.' This demand strangely surprised me, I admit. 'But you know very well, you little fool,' I answered, 'that your mistress has no other maid.' 'I will still wait on her as usual.' 'Come! come! your mistress does not wish to have a married maid.' 'Melania can take my place.' 'I beg you not to discuss it.' 'It shall be as you wish.' I declare to you, I was dumbfounded. I am so constituted that nothing exasperates me more, I venture to say, than ingratitude. I have no need to repeat to you, you know my wife; she is an angel in human shape; she is goodness itself. The greatest robber would be disarmed before her. I sent Arina away, and I thought that in time she would think better of it. I hate, you know, to believe in the evil and black ingratitude of the human heart. But—would you believe it?—six months after I again saw her come towards me with the same petition. This time I knew what she wanted. I drove her away with indignation; I threatened her, and even told her that I would tell my wife about it. I was quite upset. But imagine my astonishment when, some time after, my wife ran to me in tears and so troubled that I was frightened. 'What has happened?' 'Arina,' she said to me, 'you know—I blush to tell it to you.' 'Is it possible? But with whom, then?' 'Pétrouchka the footman.' This news made me beside myself. I am so constituted, I don't like half-measures. Pétrouchka was not to blame. I could punish him; but in my opinion he was not to blame. As to Arina—what is there to say? There is really nothing. I naturally ordered that her hair should be cut off,¹ that they should dress her in *satrapés*,² and that she should be immediately sent to the country. My wife lost in her, it is true, an excellent maid, but there was nothing to be done; yet it is impossible to tolerate such disorders in a household; it is best to cut off immediately the tainted member. Well, now, judge of it for yourself; you know my wife; she is, as I have already

1. To cut off a young woman's hair is looked upon in Russia as an infamous punishment.

2. Coarse cloth with which the seigneurs dress the wives of the *dvorovi* of the lowest class.

said, an angel. She was fond of Arina, and Arina who served her was not conscientious enough to—ah! truly, you must own it. But what good to expatiate on it? At all events, there was nothing to be done. This proof of unfeelingness affected me personally and wounded me to the highest degree. There is nothing to be said. Gratitude? feelings? No! do not ask for them. Nourish a wolf as much as you like, he will always look towards the forest. It is a lesson. But I only wished to show you—” And here Zverkoff turned away his head and wrapped himself up comfortably in his cloak, manfully keeping back the emotion that he felt.

The reader must now understand why I looked at Arina with so much interest.

“Have you been married to the miller long?” I asked her.

“Two years.”

“But how's that? Did your master give you permission?”

“They bought me.”

“Who?”

“Savéli Aléxétevitich.”

“Who is he?”

“My husband.”

I noticed that Jermolai had suppressed a smile at these words.

“My master,” continued Arina, “could he have spoken of me to you?”

I did not know what to say.

“Arina!” cried the miller in the distance. She arose and left us alone.

“Is her husband a worthy man?” I asked Jermolai.

“There is nothing to say against him.”

“Have they children?”

“They had one, but he is dead.”

“She pleased the miller, then. How much did he give to free her?”

“I know nothing about it; but she can read and write. In their kind of business it is useful, I should say. But yes, we must believe that Arina pleased him.”

“And you, have you known her long?”

“A long time. I used to go to her master's. His estate is not far from here.”

“Do you know the lackey Pétrouchka?”

"Peter Vassilitch? Of course!"

"Where is he now?"

"He is a soldier."

We were perfectly quiet for a moment without speaking.

"She seems to be suffering?" I asked my companion.

"Ah! I should think so! But I'll wager that the shooting will be good to-morrow. You had better sleep a little."

A flight of wild ducks passed whizzing over our heads, and we heard them alight on the river not far away. The night was dark, and the cold was beginning to make itself felt. The nightingale's song re-echoed through the woods. We buried ourselves in the hay, and a few minutes after we had both fallen into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER III.

BIROUK.¹

I WAS returning from shooting, alone in a *drochki*;² I had still eight verstes to go to reach my house. My good mare, who never tires, trotted along the wide dusty road, and from time to time pricked up her ears and gave a stifled neigh; my tired dog followed close to the *drochki*: one would have thought he was tied to the wheels. A storm was coming up. Opposite me a huge dark cloud arose slowly above the woods; grayish clouds rushed rapidly towards me; the leaves of the willows began to move with a murmur. The heat, stifling up to that time, suddenly lessened, and the atmosphere became cold and damp; it was becoming darker and darker. I struck my horse with the reins, descended into the ravine, crossed successfully the bed of a little dried-up stream the banks of which were covered with brushwood, ascended the opposite side, and entered the woods. The road that I took wound through a thick clump of hazel-trees, in which it was already very dark; I drove along almost at random. My *drochki* struck at every step against the gnarled roots of old oaks and lindens and sank into the deep ruts made by cart-wheels; my horse began to stumble. A violent wind suddenly sprang up, and rushed roaring through the woods; the spatter of a few large drops of rain was heard on the foliage; lightning flashed through the heavens, and was almost instantly followed by the rolling of thunder. Rain soon fell in torrents. I slackened my speed, and was soon obliged to stop; my horse sank down into the mire, and I could no longer see more than two steps in front of me. However, I succeeded as well as possible in getting under the shelter of a thick bush. Bent double, with my head buried in my cloak, I was waiting patiently for the end of the storm, when by the glare of a

1. In Russia they so call a surly man, one who lives by himself.

2. An open vehicle with four very light wheels.

flash of lightning I saw just ahead a form arise in the road, and as I looked it stood before me, near the drochki, as if it had risen out of the ground.

"Who are you?" asked a loud voice.

"And who are you?"

"I am the forester."

I told him my name.

"Ah! I know you! You are going home?"

"Yes; but do you hear the storm?"

"It is very heavy," answered the apparition.

But at that moment a vivid flash lighted up the way, and I could distinctly see the person who had accosted me. This sudden flash was immediately followed by a violent clap of thunder, and the rain came down harder than ever.

"It will not end very soon," added the forester.

"What is to be done?"

"If you like, I will take you to my *isba*,"¹ said the forester bruskiy.

"You will do me a great service."

"Please keep your seat."

The forester came up to my horse, and taking him by the bridle, led him forward. We started off. I clung on to the cushion of the drochki, that was rocking to and fro like a boat on a rough sea, and called my dog. My poor mare sank into the mud, crawled out and stumbled at every step; the forester went ahead, now to the right, now to the left of the shafts, and advanced into the darkness like a spectre. After he had gone through a part of the woods in this way, my guide stopped.

"Here we are at my house, master," he said to me quietly.

The kalitka creaked on its hinges, and the little dogs began to bark in chorus in the yard. I looked up, and made out by the light of the flashes a little *isba* in the middle of a large lot surrounded by a hedge. There was a dim light in one of the narrow windows of this place. The forester led my horse up to the steps, and knocked at the door.

"Coming! coming!" cried a youthful voice; then a pattering of bare feet was heard. The bolt was drawn, and a little girl of twelve at the most, in a short *sacque* drawn in at the waist by a cord, appeared on the threshold, a lantern in her hand.

1. The Russian peasant's house. It is built of wood and composed simply of a ground-floor.

"Hold the light for the master," my host said to her, "and I will put the drochki under the shed."

The little girl looked at me, and went into the isba. I followed her.

The forester's home consisted of a single room; and a wretched room it was. It was low, smoky, and without the utensils that one usually sees in a peasant's hut; there were neither partitions nor lofts. A ragged touloupe hung on the wall; beyond, on the bench, was a gun, and a quantity of rags were heaped up in the corner. Two large pots placed near the stove completed the furniture that was made visible by the flicker of a *loutchina*¹ burning on the table. In the middle of the room was a cradle fastened at the end of a long pole. The little girl put out the lantern, sat down on a stool, and began to swing the cradle with one hand while reviving the flame of the *loutchina* with the other. I looked about the room; the sight that I saw affected me deeply. There is nothing sadder than the interior of a peasant's isba at night. The child in the cradle was breathing painfully.

"You are alone here?" I asked the little girl.

"Yes, I am alone," she answered in a weak, timid voice.

"Are you the forester's daughter?"

"Yes," she stammered.

The door opened with a creak, and the forester, stooping in order to cross the threshold, entered the room. He took the lantern that was on the ground, and brought it to the table in order to light a candle that was there.

"You probably are not accustomed to the *loutchina*?" he said to me, throwing back his hair.

I examined him attentively, and his appearance impressed me. He was a tall man, broad-shouldered, with a figure such as one seldom sees. The muscles of his chest and brawny arms stood out beneath the folds of his thick shirt, which was dripping with water. A thick black beard covered the whole lower part of his stern, manly face; his bold, dark, half-open eyes were shaded by well-formed eyebrows that almost met. He stopped before me, with his hands on his hips.

I thanked him and asked him his name.

"My name is Foma," he answered me, "and I am called Birouk."

1. A pine knot that the Russian peasants use to light their cottages.

"Ah! you are Birouk?"

I looked at him with redoubled interest. I had often heard the forester Birouk spoken of by Jermolai and other inhabitants of the country. The peasants feared him as they did fire. There was never a man, they said, who fulfilled the duties that were confided to him with so much vigilance; he would not let them take away the slightest bit of a fagot; at all hours of the day, and even in the middle of the night, he fell on them with the suddenness of a snow-squall, and there was no resisting him; he was strong and quick as the evil one. There was no way of bribing him; neither brandy nor money had any effect on him; nothing could seduce him. Many times already had they charitably tried to send him into another world; but they had utterly failed.

Such was Birouk's reputation with the peasants of the neighborhood.

"Then you are Birouk?" I said to him. "I have often heard you spoken of, brother. They claim that you are pitiless."

"I do my duty," he answered abruptly; "one is not only to eat his master's bread but to earn it."

He took the hatchet that hung at his belt, sat on the ground, and began to make a loutchina.

"Have you no wife?" I asked him.

"No," he answered, giving a heavy blow with his hatchet.

"She is dead, then?"

"No—yes—she is dead," he replied; and he turned away.

I was silent. He raised his head and looked at me.

"She ran away with a passing bourgeois," he said to me with a ferocious smile. At these words the little girl looked down. The child awoke and began to cry. The little girl went up to the cradle. "Here! take it," said Birouk to her, holding out a nursing-bottle covered with dirt. "Look there! she deserted it," he continued in a low voice, pointing to the child. Then he went to the door; but he stopped and turned to me.

"You would doubtless not care for our bread, master?" he said to me. "And that's all we have."

"I am not hungry."

"Just as you like. I would indeed start up the samovar, but I have no tea. I will go and look after your horse."

He went out, slamming the door after him. Again I began to examine the interior of the isba; it seemed sadder than before. That acrid odor that is peculiar to places where smoke stays for any length of time choked

me. The little girl stood motionless with downcast eyes; only from time to time she pushed the cradle, timidly pulling up her frock on her shoulder; her bare legs hung down at the side of the stool.

"What is your name?" I asked her.

"Oulita," she said, bending down her thin face still farther.

The forester came back and sat down on the bench. "The storm is quieting down," he said to me after an instant's silence. "If you wish, I will show you the way out of the woods."

I arose. Birouk took up his gun and began to examine the lock.

"Why do you take it?" I asked him.

"There is mischief going on in the woods yonder. Some one is cutting down a tree in the Mare's ravine."

"How can you hear it from here?"

"Not from here, but in the yard."

We went out together. The rain had entirely ceased. A thick curtain of clouds stretched across the horizon, but above us the heavens were dark blue, and stars here and there twinkled through the rain-clouds that were flying by. One could already distinguish the form of the trees that the wind had just struck with such fury. We listened. The forester took off his hat and bent down his head.

"There, there it is," he said to me suddenly, stretching out his hand. "They have chosen a fine night for their work!"

I listened in vain. I could only make out the rustling of the leaves. Birouk took my horse out of the shed.

"If we do not hurry," he said to me, "I shall miss them."

"I will go with you. Are you willing?"

"All right," he said, taking back the horse. "We shall soon take them; then I will show you the way. Come!"

We started off. Birouk went ahead, and I followed close behind him. I really cannot tell how he found his way through the trees and brushwood, but he walked along rapidly without hesitation, and stopped now and then to listen to the blows of the axe.

"Listen!" he said between his teeth. "Do you hear? do you hear now?"

"In which direction?"

The forester shrugged his shoulders.

We entered the ravine. When we were out of the wind I could hear the blows of the axe very distinctly. Birouk

looked at me, and nodded his head. We continued our way, walking through the ferns and the nettles. I heard a loud prolonged crackling.

"He has cut it down!" muttered Birouk.

It was clearing off, and we could see about us in the woods. We at last came to the end of the ravine.

"Wait for me here," said the forester in a low voice; and cocking his gun, he stooped down and disappeared through the bushes.

I listened attentively; in spite of the howling of the wind I could make out the somewhat feeble sounds that arose at a little distance from the place where I stood. Some one was cutting the branches of a tree with an axe; then I heard the breathing of a horse and the harsh squeak from the wheels of a *téléga*. "Where are you going? Stop!" Birouk cried suddenly in a thundering voice. These words were followed by a cry plaintive as a hare's. A struggle was about to take place. "No! no!" repeated Birouk breathlessly. "You will not get away from me." I rushed towards them, and after more than one stumble I came to the place of the combat. The forester was stretched on the ground at the foot of a fallen tree; he held the struggling robber under him, and was trying to bind his hands with a belt. I rushed up to them. The peasant was in rags, and wet to the skin; a long dishevelled beard gave a most sinister look to his face. Birouk stood up, and forced his prisoner to do the same. A gaunt horse, covered with a ragged mat, and a *téléga* were a few steps off in the thicket. The forester was silent; the peasant was also silent, but was shaking his head.

"Let him go in peace," I whispered in Birouk's ear; "I will pay the price of the tree."

Birouk did not answer; he seized the horse's mane with his left hand (he had slipped his right through the thief's belt).

"Come, turn round, *crow*,"¹ he said roughly.

"There's my little axe yonder; take it," stammered the peasant.

"It must not be lost, of course," replied the forester, taking up the axe.

We started off. I walked behind. As we went along, a few drops of rain warned us that the storm was not over;

1. In Russian *varona*, a term of contempt.

and very soon, indeed, it was raining in torrents. It was not without trouble that we succeeded in getting back to the forester's. When we reached there, Birouk left the horse in the middle of the yard; and leading the peasant into the isba, untied the knot of the kouchack that held his hands, and made him sit down in the corner. I sat opposite him on the bench.

"What a pour!" the forester said to me. "You must wait until it passes over. Would you not like to lie down for a while?"

"No, thanks."

"I would have put him in the little side room so as not to inconvenience you," he said to me, pointing to the peasant; "but the latch—"

"Let him stay where he is; he does not disturb me," I answered.

The peasant looked at me without lifting his head. I firmly resolved to set the poor devil free, at whatever cost. He sat motionless on the bench where Birouk had placed him on coming in. The light of the lantern gave me a good view of him, and I looked at him more attentively. He had a thin wrinkled face, colorless eyebrows, a restless look, and his limbs were frightfully thin. The little girl stretched herself at his feet on the floor. As to Birouk, he was seated before the table, with his head in his hands. A cricket sang in the corner; the rain beat against the roof and the shutters. We were all silent.

"Foma Kousmitch," said the peasant suddenly in a dull broken voice, "Foma Kousmitch."

"What do you want?"

"Let me go."

Birouk did not answer.

"Let me go. I am miserable. Let me go."

"I know you," said the forester with a gloomy air. "You are all alike; each of you is a bigger rogue than the other."

"Let me go," answered the peasant. "The steward—we are ruined; yes, utterly ruined. Let me go."

"Ruined? That's no reason why you should steal."

"Let me go, Foma Kousmitch. Do not destroy us. You know well what awaits me. The steward will devour me; indeed he will!"

Birouk turned away. The peasant shivered every now and then as if he had a fever. He also moved his head in a strange way and breathed very quickly.

"Let me go," he continued to repeat with an accent of despair. "Let me go; in the name of God, let me go! I will pay you, as there is a God. Yes, we are miserable. The children are crying at home; you know that well. How can one help it? this life is so hard!"

"That's a poor excuse; that's no reason why you should steal."

"If you'll only leave me my poor horse," said the peasant; "at least leave me my horse. He is all I have. Don't take him away from me."

"It can't be; I have already told you so. I also have my duties to do; I must be severe with such as you."

"Let me go. I am wretched, Foma Kousmitch; I am miserable, as true as I live!"

"I know you."

"Let me go, in heaven's name!"

"Come, will you stop this? You know well I am not joking. There's a seigneur there; don't you see him?"

The poor devil hung his head. Birouk began to yawn and to lean his brow against the table. It was still raining. I awaited impatiently the end of this sad scene.

The peasant suddenly stood up; his eyes sparkled and the color mounted to his livid cheeks. "Come! here," he cried, with his eyes half shut and his lips quivering with hate, "devour me, cursed assassin! drink the blood of a Christian; drink it!"

The forester turned away.

"I am speaking to you," continued the peasant; "you, *Asiatic*,¹ drinker of blood, you!"

"Have you lost your mind?" said the forester. "I believe rather you are drunk."

"Drunk? I have not become drunk at your expense, have I? cursed slayer of souls! ferocious beast!"

"I will teach you."

"Don't talk to me! What do I care? I am desperate. What do you think will become of me without a horse? Kill me; I had rather have it over at once than die of hunger. Let us all perish at once—my wife, my children! As to you, never fear; we shall meet you again."

Birouk arose.

"Strike! strike me!" resumed the peasant with rage. "Strike! Come, strike me, then!"

1. A common epithet in Russia, probably dating from the Tartar invasion.

At these words the little girl, who was lying down, started up.

"Silence!" cried the forester in a thundering voice, and he made a step forward.

"Come, let him go, Foma," I cried in my turn. "He won't trouble you."

"I will not keep still!" resumed the unfortunate man with more violence than ever. "I might as well be knocked in the head now as not. You are a slayer of souls, a ferocious beast! But wait; you will not reign much longer. You will be strung up by the neck, you may be sure of that!"

Birouk seized him by the shoulder. I ran to the peasant's help.

"Let him alone, master!" the forester cried to me.

This injunction did not frighten me, and I had already stretched out my hands, when, to my great astonishment, Birouk suddenly untied the kouchack that bound the peasant's arms, and seizing him by the neck he thrust his cap over his eyes, opened the door, and pushed him out.

"Go to the devil, you and your horse!" he cried out as he saw him go away, "and beware if I ever catch you again."

As he said this, the forester quietly went into his isba, shut the door, and began to move something about in a corner.

"Really, Birouk," I said to him, "you astonished me. You are a worthy man. As I regard—"

"Come, master, we won't speak of that," he answered impatiently. "But don't go and talk about it. I will now show you the way, for it doesn't look as if it would stop raining very soon. Ah, there he is going off!" he added in a low voice, as he heard the noise that the wheels of a téléga made as it passed before the windows of the isba. "Ah! I—"

Half an hour after I took leave of him on the edge of the woods.

CHAPTER IV.

MALINOVA.

IN Russia, at the beginning of August, the heat becomes almost unbearable. At this time of the year the most hardy and patient man is obliged to give up the pleasures of shooting from noon until three o'clock and the most intrepid dog begins, as the common saying is, to lick his master's spurs, or, in other words, trots along at his heels, with his eyes half shut, with a languid look and his tongue hanging out; the most peremptory orders have no effect on him; he wags his tail with a humble air, his features express the most complete submission, but none the less does he trot along quietly behind you.

It was precisely on such a day some years ago that I was out shooting. For a long time I resisted the temptation to lie down under the shade of a tree, if only for a moment. My dog continued, it is true, beating about the bushes with a great deal of zeal, but probably with no hope of finding anything; the heat was becoming more and more stifling. I at last decided to seek shelter from the sun, and dragged myself along in the best way I could to the *Ista*, already known to my indulgent readers. I descended the bank and walked along, following the damp sandy shore, by the side of a spring known in the country about under the name of "Malinova." The waters of this spring, bursting out of the bank, follow a deep but narrow ravine, and fall into the river at twenty steps at the most from its source, forming a cascade the murmur of which recalls the confused noise of a lively conversation. Oak bushes cover the sides of the ravine; the grass about the spring is short and green; while winding along at the bottom of the ravine, this little thread of cold, silvery water is almost always sheltered from the rays of the sun. I came up to the spring; a ladle of birch-bark had been left on the grass by some peasant for those who should come there, like himself, to quench their thirst. I made use of it; then, stretching myself in the shade, I began to look about me. Near a

point of the river where the fall in question forms a circle of waves perpetually coming and going were seated two old men; their backs were turned to me. One of them was large and robust; he wore a plush hat, and his kaftan was almost new. He was fishing. The other was small and wretched-looking; he wore a patched surtout of *moukhoïar*,¹ and every moment or so passed his hand over his grizzly head as if to keep off the rays of the sun, for he had no head-covering. He held on his knees a pot full of worms. I was not long in recognizing him: he was a man named Stépouchka, from the village of Choumikina. Before going farther I will give to the reader all the information that I had gathered about this curious person.

The village of Choumikina is rather large; at one end of the main street that runs through it stands a little stone church, dedicated to Saint Cōma and Saint Damier. Opposite this church was a vast seignorial establishment, with all its dependencies, offices, work-shops, stables, coach-houses and sheds, baths, kitchens, lodgings for passing guests and stewards, orangeries, see-saws for the peasants, and a few other objects of the same kind more or less useful. Everything was going along there as one would wish, when, one fine morning, this magnificent seignorial place was entirely destroyed by fire. The masters of the place went off to another home, and this spot, once so lively, soon became a desert, or very nearly so. Now one no longer saw anything but a vegetable-garden, in the middle of which stood here and there heaps of bricks, remains of the former foundations. Not far from this some beams, rescued from the fire, were made use of to build hastily a little isba that was covered with boards that had been bought ten years before for the roof of a Gothic summer-house that had never been finished; and this modest retreat was used as a house by a gardener named Mitrophané, his wife Aksinia, and their seven children. It was Mitrophané's duty to furnish vegetables for the table of his lord, who lived on an estate at a hundred and fifty verstes away. Aksinia had been given the care of a Tyrolean cow that had just been sent from Moscow at great expense, and which, as she was farrow, had never given a drop of milk; and a drake, a fine bird adorned with a top-knot and maroon-colored, the only representative of the seignorial poultry-yard. As to Mitrophané's children, on

1. Very cheap coarse cloth.

account of their youth no duty was required of them; but they were already confirmed idlers. I had several times stopped at this gardener's and bought cucumbers of him, as I passed by, which were of an enormous size, even in mid-summer, and were especially distinguished for their watery taste and the thickness of their tough yellowish skin. It was during one of these visits that I saw Stépouchka for the first time. Of the numbers of *dvorovi* that were at Choumikina when the village was a seignorial residence, the only ones left were Mitrophane and his family, and a very deaf old man, Guérasmine, whom a soldier's wife,¹ an unattractive creature and blind in one eye, lodged out of charity in a corner of her *isba*. As to Stépouchka, you could not class him with the *dvorovi*, nor even with human beings in general; he was, as we shall see, a creature of a particular order.

Every man, whoever he may be, has a certain position in society; there is not an individual in the world who, living among other men, is not united to a common centre by some tie or other. Even the *dvorovi* are in this condition; they receive from their lord a salary or an allowance of food more or less sufficient for their wants. Stépouchka was an exception to the rule: no kind of assistance was given him; he had no knowledge of any relatives, and no one gave him a thought. This strange individual had not even a past, and had probably never figured in a revision.² Report ran that once he had been a valet of some person or other; but nothing was known as to where he came from, how he happened to be among the serfs of the estate of Choumikina, by what circumstances he had become the possessor of the *kaftan* of *moukholar* that he had worn from time immemorial, where he slept, or how he lived. No one could answer a single one of these questions, and, to tell the truth, not one of the inhabitants of the place took any interest in them. Uncle Trafine, who knew the genealogy of all the *dvorovi* up to the fourth generation in the ascending line, had once been heard to say that Stépouchka had formerly had a parent in the country; she was, as well as he could remember, a Turkish woman whom the late Brigadier Alexis Romanitch, lord of the village, had been pleased to bring back in a convoy at the end of a campaign. Stépouchka was

1. Peasant-women become free when their husbands are made soldiers, but they generally continue to live in the villages where their families reside.

2. A periodical census of the population.

never admitted to the tables and casks that stood about on every side on fête-days, when, according to the old custom, the whole household was treated to pastry and brandy; he did not come like all the rest to kiss his master's hand, after making him a low bow; he was not allowed to toss off a glass of brandy at a draught to his master and to his health, in his presence. Sometimes one of the assistants in passing handed him, out of pity, a piece of half-eaten cake: this was the only windfall that fell to his share from the festivities. They gave him their good wishes, it is true, on Easter-day; but he did not roll up the greasy sleeve of his coat, he did not take out of his back pocket a red egg, he did not offer it blinking, and in an awkward and nervous manner, to his master's daughters or their respected mother. He passed the summer in a little shed behind the hen-house, and in winter he took refuge in the little room leading to the bath;¹ when it was extremely cold he took shelter in a hay-loft. He was seen coming and going; sometimes the servants gave him a blow with the fist, but they never spoke to him; he never even, so far as I know, opened his mouth about his bad treatment.

A little time after the burning of the house and of the seignorial dependencies this forsaken being went to seek an asylum at the gardener Mitrophane's. Mitrophane let him alone; he did not hasten to show him the door, nor did he ask him to stay. So it could not be said that Stépouchka lived at the gardener's: he vegetated in the garden. He walked and moved without the slightest noise; he always covered his mouth while he coughed or sneezed, and a kind of anxiety was depicted on his countenance; he was always in motion, and hurried silently from one corner to another like an ant; but his perpetual comings and goings had but one object—food. Poor Stépouchka would very certainly have died of hunger if he had not thus been constantly on the watch for his subsistence. Not to know when rising in the morning whether you will have anything to eat by evening is a sad lot. Stépouchka, however, was not very particular about what he had to eat: now he might be seen seated under a hedge, devouring a radish or withered cabbage-stalks covered with dirt; now he would be going along quite out of breath and carrying, God knows where, a

1. The baths consist, in the villages, of two rooms, one of which serves as an ante-chamber.

bucket of water; or else he might be surprised lighting a fire under a kettle into which he was throwing little pieces of a black substance that he brought mysteriously wrapped up in a fold of his coat; at times, also, he would be heard striking light blows in his corner with a piece of wood, driving nails and fixing a board for bread. But, according to his habit, he went through these different occupations without saying a word, with a kind of distrust; one had hardly time to catch a glimpse of him before he was already hidden somewhere. He often disappeared for several days; but no one, of course, noticed these absences. Then suddenly he came back to his usual haunts, and he would be discovered some fine morning near a hedge putting sticks of wood under a kettle. He had thin features, little yellowish eyes, hair that came down over his brow, a sharp nose, enormous transparent ears; his beard was never cared for, but it never grew beyond a certain length. Such is the portrait of the individual whom I had just seen on the banks of the Ista, in company with another old man.

I approached the two fishers, and wishing them good-day, sat down beside them. I knew all about Stépouchka's companion also; he was a freed serf who had belonged to Count Peter Ilitch * * *; his name was Mikail Savélitch, but they had given him the name of Toumane.¹ He lived with a bourgeois of Bolkhoff, the proprietor of an inn where I often put up.

Young government clerks and other people who travel for pleasure (merchants buried among their cushions have other things in their head) may have noticed on the highway of Orel, at a little distance from the borough of Troitsk, a large two-storied house, entirely deserted, with its roof fallen in and its windows boarded up; it is almost on the highway itself. There was nothing sadder than this ruin in broad daylight. Count Peter Ilitch, a rich lord of the old school, celebrated for his hospitality and his magnificence, had once lived there. All the proprietors of the government were once wont to assemble under his roof, dancing and giving themselves up to every kind of merry-making, to the deafening noise of a domestic orchestra, and to the light of rockets and Roman candles; more than one old woman, while actually passing this deserted house, must have given a sigh as she recalled the pleasures of her youth

1. Fog.

and the times that were no more. With a beaming countenance and a smile on his lips he continued for a long time to welcome the crowds of toadies that hung about him. But unfortunately his fortune came to an end before he did. When his ruin was complete, he started for Petersburg to beg for a position, but he died in an inn before he obtained one. Toumane had been a butler in the Count's household, but before he died the Count had freed this old servant. Toumane was now a man of about seventy; his features were regular and pleasant; when he smiled, as he often did, his smile had that expression of nobleness and kindness that was peculiar to men of the time of Catherine; he spoke slowly in a somewhat nasal tone, and every time that he blew his nose or took a pinch of snuff he did it with a serious air, as if he had accomplished something important.

"Well, Mikail Savélitch," I asked him, "have you caught any fish?"

"Yes; please look in the basket; I have two perch and five or six mullet. Show them, Stépa."

Stépouchka held the basket out for me to look at.

"How are you getting along, Stéphan?"¹ I said.

"But—but—but not badly, father," he answered with great difficulty.

"And is Mitrophane well?"

"Yes, cer—certainly, father."

The poor devil turned away.

"But they don't bite any too well," replied Toumane. "It is too warm. The fish hide under the bushes; they are asleep. Put on a worm, Stépa."

Stépouchka obeyed; he took a worm, put it in the palm of his hand, hit it two or three times, put it on the hook, spat on it, and gave it to Toumane.

"Thanks, Stépa. And you, father," he said, turning to me, "are you out shooting?"

"As you see."

"Ah! really? Is that little dog there English or *Fourlandais*?"

The old man at times liked to show that he also, in his time, had mixed with the world.

"I don't know what breed he is, but he is a good beast."

"Ah! really? Do you ever follow the hounds?"

"Yes, I have a little pack of my own."

1. Stépouchka or Stépa are the diminutives of Stépane (Stephen).

Toumane smiled and shook his head. "Yes, indeed," he said, "there are those who love dogs and those who don't know what to do with them. I, in my simplicity, think dogs should be kept chiefly for looks. But then everything should be on the same scale: you should have good horses, good grooms, and all the rest. The Count—God be with him!—was not, to tell the truth, a great sportsman, but nevertheless he kept a pack, and was pleased to follow them two or three times a year. Then huntsmen used to assemble in the courtyard, in red laced coats, and begin to wind the horn; his lordship deigned to appear, and a horse was brought to him; when he had mounted, the first huntsman would put his feet into the stirrups, then taking off his hat would put the ends of the reins in it and hand them to his lordship. That done, his lordship was pleased to cluck, so, with his tongue; the huntsmen immediately pushed ahead with a shout, and off they started. One of the huntsmen never left the Count; he held with a silken leash two of his favorite dogs, and he took good care of them, I can assure you. This huntsman was perched up on a very high Cossack saddle; he was a red-faced man, and he looked at you with large eyes that he rolled about continually. There were also, of course, guests who followed the hunt. They enjoyed themselves, and everything passed off happily, and then— Ah! it has got away, the Asiatic!" he added, drawing in his line.

"They said the Count led a merry life. Is it so?" I asked the old man.

"He was a man who liked to cut a figure; every one knows that," answered Toumane, and spitting on his hook, he threw it back into the river. "The highest people of Petersburg would visit him. They would sit down to his table covered with blue ribbons. Ah! but there was no one like him to do the honors of a house. He had a habit of calling me up and saying, 'Toumane, you must get some live *sterlets*¹ for to-morrow; give orders accordingly.' 'You shall be obeyed, your Excellency.' Embroidered kaftans, perukes, canes, scents, *eau de Cologne* of the first quality, snuff-boxes, pictures twice your size—everything came direct from Paris. Did he give a banquet,—all-powerful God, master of my life! fireworks, driving and riding—it was a procession! Even cannon were fired.

1. A fish much thought of in Russia.

There was always in the house an orchestra of forty musicians. The precentor was a foreigner; but in the end he became too exacting: he wished to dine once and for all at his master's table, but the Count would not hear of it. 'My musicians know their business and can do without him. Show him the door, and God be with him.' He was to be obeyed; he was the master. Sometimes they danced; it would last till daybreak, and it was the *écossaise matradaire*. Hey! hey! hey! there's a bite, brother!" said the old man, cutting short his story, as he pulled out his line, on which was a mullet. "Here, Stépa;" and he gave him the fish.

"He was the right kind of a master," he resumed, again throwing in his line; "then he had a good heart. Now and then he beat us; but he was no sooner through with it than he forgot it. There was but one fault to be found with him: he had *mattresses*. Oh! the *mattresses*. In that way—God forgive me!—he was ruined. He generally took them from among us. They should not have been too exacting. Ah! yes indeed! On the contrary, they wanted the very best to be found in all Europe. Perhaps you may say that he was free to live as he liked. Yes, doubtless a master does as he thinks best; but he should not ruin himself. There was one especially who cost him dear; her name was Akoulina; but—God rest her soul!—she is dead now. She was a girl of the people; her father was a *déciatski*¹ at Sitofa; but she was bad like the rest. One would think she had bewitched the Count. She made a soldier of my nephew: he had spilled a cup of chocolate on her dress. And he was not the only one who had cause to complain. Ah, well! in spite of that, those were good old times." Here the old man gave a deep sigh; then he bowed his head and became silent.

Though we were in the shade, the heat was intense, and one turned in vain in every direction for a breath of air. The atmosphere was perfectly still; the sun shot out its burning rays; the heavens were clear, but of a deep blue. Opposite us, on the other side of the river, stretched a field of oats, the tops of which, just beginning to grow yellow, were mixed in with a few tufts of wormwood. Not the slightest movement could be seen. A little lower down, a peasant's horse stood in the water up to its knees,

1. A tithing-man; a title they give in villages to peasants under the Starosta's orders, and charged in particular with the police, and works in villages.

slowly swinging its wet tail from side to side. At the foot of the reeds that crowned the river a large fish suddenly appeared on the surface of the water, and after making a few bubbles went slowly back to the bottom, leaving behind a circle of little ripples that soon faded away. Crickets sang on all sides in the brown grass. The cry of the quail was more languid than usual. Hawks hovered majestically above the corn-fields, and paused now and then, spreading out their tails and flapping their wings. Overcome by the heat, we sat without making the slightest movement. Steps were suddenly heard behind us, by the side of the spring. Turning round, I saw a peasant about fifty years old coming down the ravine; he was covered with dust, in *lapti*,¹ and carrying over his shoulders his *armiak* and a wallet of bark. He went up to the spring, eagerly quenched his thirst, and then rose.

"Hey! Vlass!" exclaimed Toumane, looking at him. "Good-day, brother; where, in God's name, did you come from?"

"Good-day, Mikail Savélitch," answered the peasant, coming up to us. "I came from a distance."

"From where, then?" Toumane asked him.

"I have been to see my master at Moscow."

"Why?"

"I had a favor to ask him."

"What was it?"

"I went to beg him to lower my rent, or to put me at work, or else to remove me to another estate. My son is dead; it is impossible for me, now that I am alone, to get along."

"Your son is dead?"

"He is dead," answered the peasant. There was a pause.

"My dead son was a *zoostchik*² at Moscow, and it was he, I must confess it, who paid my *abrok*."

"You are now, then, *à l'abrok*?"

"Yes."

"Well, what did your master answer you?"

"My master? He was very angry, and said to me, 'How dare you present yourself before me without asking permission? The steward looks after such things. You should first,' he said to me, 'speak to the steward. And where do

1. Birch-bark shoes that the peasants wear, especially when travelling.
2. A cab-driver.

you wish me to send you? Begin,' he said, 'by paying what you owe me.'

"Well, so you came back?"

"Yes. Yet before coming away the idea occurred to me to go and see whether my dead son had left anything; but I could bring nothing to light. When I went to his master's house, I said to him, 'I am Philip's father.' 'Who will vouch for you?' he answered. 'Besides,' he said, 'your son left nothing; on the contrary, he owed me.' So I left."

The peasant smiled as he said this. One might imagine that he was telling something with which he had nothing to do. But a little tear shone in his eye, and now and then his lips twitched.

"And you are going home?"

"Where should I go? Certainly I am going home. My wife must be ravenously hungry by this time."

"You ought—how then?" exclaimed Stépouchka suddenly. But he became confused, and began to fumble silently in the pot that he had on his knees.

"Shall you go and see the steward?" answered Toumane, while looking at Stépouchka in wonder.

"What good would it do? I am behind in my rent; my son had been ill for a year before he died, and he could not even pay his own *abrok*. Ah! that didn't disturb me! It would be strange if he found anything to take from me. Ah! I defy him! As to guarantees," he added, laughing, "I haven't any for Kinticiane Sémenitch; he can rack his brains as much as he wishes." Vlass began to laugh more than ever as he said this.

"All that, brother Vlass," said Toumane slowly, "may turn out badly for you."

"What can happen? Not—" But here the peasant's voice suddenly died away. "How hot it is!" he added, wiping his brow with his coat-sleeve.

"What is your master's name?" I asked him.

"Count Valerian Pétrovitch * * *."

"Peter Ilitch's son?"

"Yes," answered Toumane. The late Peter Ilitch during his life had given Vlass the land that he lives on.

"And how is he?"

"He is well, God be thanked," answered Vlass. "Now his face is red, and he is very stout. He is very well."

"That's right, father," continued Toumane, "the *abrok* would not be too heavy if the village were near Moscow."

"And how much does the *téglo*¹ pay?"

"Ninety-five roubles," muttered Vlass.

"See that; and almost no land! There are only the seigneur's woods."

"They said that even those were sold."

"See that! Stépa, give me a worm. Come! are you asleep?"

Stépouchka gave a start.

The peasant sat down beside us. We were silent. The refrain of a song suddenly echoed out from the other side of the river; it breathed sadness and despondency. Poor Vlass put his head into his hands and became pensive.

Half an hour after we separated.

1. *Téglo* represents a workman settled on a certain portion of land. Often two peasants make one of them.

CHAPTER V.

DEATH.

I HAVE for a neighbor a young proprietor, a keen though somewhat inexperienced sportsman. One fine morning in July I rode to his place and proposed to him to go grouse-shooting. He eagerly agreed to this, but on one condition. "We will first go along," he said to me, "in the direction of the Zoucha; in that way I can visit my woods of Tchapliguina, where they are now cutting." I agreed to this. He immediately had his horse saddled, put on a green coat with metal buttons on which was stamped a boar's head, took a richly embroidered game-bag, a silver powder-pouch, and threw over his shoulder a gun of French make, resplendent in its newness. That done, he examined himself attentively in the glass, and called his sporting-dog, Esperance, which an old-maid cousin, very richly endowed in point of sentiment, but somewhat bald, had just made him a present of. Soon after we started off for the Zoucha, accompanied by the déciatski Arkipe, a large peasant with a square face and prominent cheek-bones. A steward, a native of the Baltic Provinces, who had but recently entered upon his duties, joined us. He was a light-haired young man of five-and-twenty, extremely thin and pale, short-sighted, with sloping shoulders and, as an offset, an immensely long neck. His name was Gottlieb Van der Kock. I must add that my neighbor had been in the enjoyment of his property for but a short time; he had inherited it from one of his aunts who was remarkable during her life for her prodigious corpulence: she became so stout, in the latter part of her life, that she could no longer walk.

The little wood of the Zoucha was not far off; we were there in a very short time.

"Wait for me here," said Ardaliane Mikaflovitch to our fellow-travellers. The German bowed, got off his horse, sat down in the shade near a bush, and took a book from his pocket: it was, I believe, a romance of *Jeanne Chopenhauer*.¹ As to

1. A writer of German romance; she excels in the sentimental kind.

the déciatski Arkipe, he stopped his steed in the glare of the sun, and did not dismount; an hour after we found him in the same place.

We beat carefully about without starting a single head of game. This beginning was not very encouraging; so Ardaliane Mikallovitch declared that he was going to stop shooting. I did likewise, and resolved to go with him into the woods that he proposed visiting. We went back to the field where we had left our people. The German put back his book into his pocket after he had marked the page, and mounted, not without difficulty, the restive mare that he was riding, who never failed to give a sharp neigh and a little kick when she was thwarted in the slightest way. The enormous déciatski bestirred himself, drew in his reins, began to shake his legs, and finally persuaded his wretched steed to start. We all four went off towards the woods in question.

I had been familiar with this place from my childhood, and had been there many times with my French tutor, M. Désiré Fleury, a worthy man with whom I had but one fault to find—that of having nearly ruined my stomach by administering Leroy's medicine. The woods of Tchapliguina were not very extensive; they consisted of only two or three hundred trees of ash and oak, but these had attained a prodigious size. At a little distance from the ground their black trunks stood out against a background of clumps of hazels, planes, and mountain-ashes, the transparent foliage of which was scintillating with light; higher they were outlined proudly upon the brilliant blue of the heavens, and at their tops they were crowned by a diadem of green, above which hovered, giving forth their piercing cry, hawks, buzzards, and kestrels. In the midst of this foliage echoed the loud song of the black-bird; at every moment were heard the repeated blows of the strange feathered woodpecker striking against the trunks of these giants; lower down, in the bushes, twittered the warblers and the siskins; finches ran gayly along the paths; hares glided furtively out here and there between the yoke-elms; and after jumping from one tree to another, a red squirrel sat motionless with its tail curled over its back. In the midst of the grass, and often a few steps from an enormous ant-hill, under the light shade of the finely cut fern-leaves, bloomed violets and lilies of the valley, with fungi of every kind all about them; at the edge of the clearings, near the thick bushes, grew strawberry-plants with their red fruit.

Oh! what delicious rest was there! Even during the greatest heat, in the middle of the day, one would have thought that it was already night, so profound was the calm there, so balmy the air, so penetrating the freshness. I have passed in that place hours that I shall never forget, and that is why, I confess it, that it was not without a pang that I gazed at the sight before me. The terrible winter of the year 1840¹ had not spared my old friends the oaks and the ash-trees, that stood up half-dead out of the midst of shoots that had pushed out on all sides at their feet. Some of these old trunks were encircled by a bit of green, above which dried-up branches sprang out with an air of reproach; others were thicker with leaves, it is true, but much less bushy than of yore; others were stretched out on the ground like enormous corpses, and were already rotting. Finally,—a strange thing, and of which I would never have dreamed,—there was scarcely any shade in the woods of Tchaplignina. “Oh yes,” I thought, when I saw these trees that had so often sheltered me in my childhood, “you are sad. I understood it; you are ashamed of your lot. Is it not so?” I recalled involuntarily *Koltsoff*'s² verses:

“ Art thou vanished,
Regal splendor?
And thou, proud strength,
Where lies hidden thy ponderous diadem?”

“How is it,” I asked Ardaliene Mikallovitch, “that they did not cut these trees down instead of leaving them for the wind to overturn? Now they will no longer bring a tenth of the price that they were worth standing.”

“You must ask that question of my aunt,” he answered, shrugging his shoulders. “However, merchants came along, money in hand, and proposed to buy them, and even were eager to do it instantly.”

“Mein Gott! mein Gott!” exclaimed Van der Kock at every step. “*Quel tomnage! quel tomnage!*”

1. In 1840, the winter being severe, and the ground having been without snow up to the end of December, the corn was frozen, and a great number of old oaks perished. It would be difficult to replace them, in the present condition of arboriculture in Russia; the producing force of the land is becoming exhausted; in the *consecrated* places (about which they walk with images and which it is a sin to touch) there are no longer oaks and lindens as formerly, but many birches and aspens grow there naturally. As there is not yet any means of keeping up or renewing the woods in Russia, the trees that are its finest ornaments will soon be very rare. (*Note of the author.*)

2. A very distinguished Russian national poet.

"What exasperates you so?" asked my neighbor, laughing.

The young German explained to him, in an almost unintelligible jargon, that it was the sight of these magnificent trees stretched on the ground that brought forth these exclamations. However sad it was, this sight did not affect the déciatski Arkipe in the least: he gazed at it with perfect indifference, and seemed even much gratified at having these trunks in the way; you saw him doing his utmost to force his unfortunate horse to clear them, and he gave them little blows of his whip as he passed. Just as we came to the place where they were cutting, a sharp crack was heard; it was immediately followed by cries and confused murmurs. We started off in that direction, when a young peasant with distorted features and disordered clothes rushed out of the thicket at a few steps from us.

"What has happened?" Ardaliane Mikallovitch cried to him; "where are you running to like that?"

"Ah! father Ardaliane Mikallovitch," said the peasant, stopping immediately as he heard his master's voice, "what a misfortune!"

"What is it?"

"Maxime has just been crushed by a tree."

"What! the contractor?"

"Yes, father, the contractor. We were just attacking an oak with an axe, and he was looking at us do it. He stood like that for quite a while; then he went towards the well; he seemed to be thirsty. The oak began suddenly to crack and bend over towards Maxime. 'Save yourself! save yourself!' we cried to him. But instead of jumping to one side, he began to run straight ahead. He had doubtless lost his head. In touching the ground the branches struck him. But why the tree fell so soon, God knows! it must have been hollow."

"Was he killed by the blow?"

"No, father; he is yet alive. But he is as good as killed; his arms and legs are broken. I was running to find Sélivestritch, the doctor."

Ardaliane Mikallovitch ordered the déciatski to go as quickly as he could to the village, and to bring back Sélivestritch. He himself set off at a gallop in the direction of the cutting. I followed him. We found poor Maxime stretched on the ground; a dozen peasants surrounded him. We dismounted. The wounded man was not complaining; he opened his eyes from time to time, looked about him

with an air of astonishment, and now and then a slight twitching passed over his blue lips. From the irregular movements of his chest you could see that he breathed with difficulty; his hair was matted on his brow and his chin trembled: he was dying. A young linden-tree lightly shaded his face. We bent over him; he recognized Ardaliane Mikallovitch.

"Father," he said to him with an effort, "send for the—priest. The Lord—has punished me. My legs and arms are broken—I am broken in pieces. To-day is Sunday—and I have—I have made my men work all the same." He was silent; he could scarcely breathe. "Send," he continued, "send—the money that is due me—to my wife—after you have paid—Mésime, there, he will tell you—what I owe."

"We have sent for the doctor, my poor Maxime," my neighbor said to him. "Perhaps you will not die."

At these words, the wounded man, who had closed his eyes, raised his eyelids with an effort, looked at Ardaliane Mikallovitch tenderly, and answered him: "No—I am going to die. There it is—it approaches—there, there. Forgive me, children—if I have—"

"God will forgive you, Maxime Mikallovitch," replied the peasants with one voice, and they uncovered their heads. "We ask your forgiveness."

The dying man moved his head convulsively; he put his chest forward as if making an effort to rise, and again sank back.

"He must not die there," said Ardaliane Mikallovitch; "bring the mat that is in the *téléga*, put him on it, and take him to the hospital." Some of the wood-cutters ran to the cart.

"Yesterday," murmured the dying man, "I bought—at Jéfime—of Sitchoov—a horse. I gave him earnest-money. The horse is then—mine. You must—the horse—to my wife."

They placed him on the mat; he trembled all over like a wounded bird, and grew stiff. "He is dead," said the peasants in a low voice. We silently remounted our horses and went back to the field.

The scene that I had just witnessed made me think of the manner in which the people die in Russia. You could not tax them with indifference at this supreme moment; no, they seem to look death in the face as a duty to be accomplished, and that is why they meet it with a calm and equa-

ble temper. Some years ago a peasant of the neighborhood was surprised by the flames in a drying-room for corn where he was working. Probably he would have perished but for a bourgeois who was passing near there, and who ran to his help. Having broken through the door by a shove of his shoulders, he plunged into a tub of water, then rushed to the bottom of the drying-room. I went to see him. The place where he lay was dark, and was suffocating from heat and smoke.

"Where is the sufferer?" I asked as I came in.

"Here he is, father, over the stove," sadly answered a peasant seated in a corner, and holding his head between his hands as a sign of grief.

I went up to the peasant. He was covered with a touloupe, and was breathing with difficulty.

"How do you feel?" I asked him.

The wounded man moved; though covered with wounds and dying, he wanted to rise to receive me.

"Lie down! Be quiet! How do you feel?"

"Very badly, as is natural."

"You suffer a great deal?" He was silent. "Do you want anything?" He did not answer. "Shall I send you some tea?"

"It would be useless."

"I left him and sat down on the bench. A quarter, a half-hour passed in this way. The silence of the tomb reigned in the isba. A little girl of about five crouched in a corner, under the images. She was eating a piece of bread, and her mother threatened her from time to time with her finger. In the outer room there was heard the sound of walking, talking, and heavy pounding. The peasant's sister-in-law was cutting up cabbages for the winter's provisions.

"Arina," cried the patient.

"What do you want?"

"Give me some *kvass*."¹

The peasant brought him some, and a profound silence again came over the room.

"Has he received communion?" I asked the peasant in a low voice.

"Yes," she answered.

Everything was ready; he awaited only death. I left the isba, not being able to bear the sad sight.

1. A popular drink. It is made of fermented barley.

Another day I chanced to go to the house of a man named Kapitone, who held the position of surgeon to the village hospital of Krasnogerié, and with whom I had often been out shooting. The dedication of this hospital, which was established in one of the wings of the seignorial house, was made in the following way: The châtelaine had had inscribed in white characters above the door, "The Hospital of Krasnogerié." This ceremony gone through with, she sent to Kapitone a very fine album destined for the registry of the sick. The first leaf of this precious register was adorned with French verses composed for the occasion by one of the parasites who were about this lady. The poet expressed himself in this way:

"In these fair haunts where Mirth and Joy now reign,
Beauty once deigned to consecrate this fane;
Your lords are gallant gentlemen, I trow,
Good folks of Krasnogerié; is't not so?"

Another officious person had written underneath,

"And I too am a lover of nature!!
"JEAN KOBYLIATRÉKOFF."

The surgeon Kapitone had been obliged to buy six beds at his own expense, and he had gone to work trusting in Providence. The officials of the establishment consisted of an old engraver affected with a mental trouble, and an old woman with withered hands, named Milikitrisia; the latter fulfilled the duties of cook. These two personages were charged with the drying and steeping of the medicinal plants and preparing drugs. They were also enjoined to restrain the patients who had a burning fever. The engraver was gloomy and taciturn; he had a habit of asking every one who came to the hospital for authority to marry the girl Melania, and sometimes he sang in the night a love-song. The old cook beat him and made him watch the turkeys.

While we were speaking of the last time we were out shooting, a téléga drove into the yard. It was driven by a peasant, whose new armiak showed off his broad shoulders, and it was drawn by an enormous horse such as millers usually own.

"Ah! Vasili Dmitritch," Kapitone cried out to him from the window, "welcome. It is the miller of Lionboucha," he said to me in a low voice.

The peasant groaned slightly as he got off the téléga came,

into the room where we were, gazed at the images, and crossed himself.

"Well, Vasili Dmitritch, what news is there? But you are not looking well; are you ill?"

"Yes, Kapitone Timofefevitch, I am not as well as I might be."

"What's the matter with you?"

"This is what happened to me, Kapitone Timofefevitch. Having bought a stone for my mill some time ago in town, I brought it to the house. When taking it out of the téléga I think I must have strained myself. I felt in my loins as if something was torn; and since that I have not been as well as usual. To-day I am even worse."

"Humph!" said Kapitone, taking a pinch of snuff. "It is a rupture. And is it long since it happened?"

"Yes, ten days ago."

"Ten days!" replied the surgeon, shaking his head and drawing in his breath with a thoughtful air. "Let me examine you."

When the examination was over, "Well, Vasili Dmitritch," he said, "I pity you sincerely; your condition is not of the best. Stay here. I will do everything I can to pull you through, but will answer for nothing."

"Is it really as bad as all that?" stammered the miller, quite stupefied by this revelation.

"Yes, Vasili Dmitritch, it is very bad. If you had only come to me two days sooner, I could have cured you in a trice; but now inflammation has set in. That's the worst of it; mortification is but a matter of time."

"It is not possible, Kapitone Timofefevitch!"

"I tell you it is only too true."

"How can it be?"

The surgeon did not answer; he simply shrugged his shoulders.

"To die for such a trifle!"

"I do not say that you will die from it, but I advise you to stay here."

The peasant began to reflect. For a few moments he kept his eyes on the floor, then he looked at us; at last, after thus meditating in silence, he scratched his neck and took up his hat.

"Where are you going, Vasili Dmitritch?"

"Where am I going? Home, of course, since I am so ill. If it is so bad as all that, I must put my affairs in order."

"You will repent it, Vasili Dmitritch, I tell you. I don't even understand how you could have come as far as this. Stay, then,—come!"

"No, brother Kapitone Timofevitch; since I must die, as well die at home. God knows what will take place then."

"It is impossible to know how the thing will turn out, Vasili Dmitritch. The case is doubtless very bad, I agree. But it is just for that reason that you should stay here."

"No, Kapitone Timofevitch," answered the miller, shaking his head; "I cannot stay; but you will prescribe for me?"

"That will do no good."

"I cannot stay, I tell you."

"Well, do as you like,—but don't reproach me for it hereafter."

The surgeon tore one of the leaves out of his note-book, wrote a prescription, and explained to the patient how he should apply it. The miller took the paper, gave a fifty-kopek piece to the surgeon, left the room, and got into his *téléga*.

"Well, farewell, Kapitone Timofevitch," he cried out to him. "Don't be angry with me, and remember my orphans if by chance—"

"Come, stay then, Vasili!"

The peasant simply shook his head, struck his horse with the end of the rein, and made for the village highway. I went out on the road and looked after him. The road was muddy and full of ruts. The miller drove prudently, skilfully avoiding the bad places, and nodded to every one he met. Three days after I learned that he was dead.

The Russian faces death, I repeat, in a very peculiar manner. Many examples of this kind occur to me. I have not forgotten you, my worthy friend Avenir Sorokooumoff—you, the best of men! I can still see your consumptive face, withered and pallid, your light hair, your modest smile, your enthusiastic gaze, your emaciated limbs; I can hear your weak, caressing voice! Leaving the University without finishing your studies there, you went to live, I remember, with a certain Gour Kroupianikoff, a very respectable Russian seigneur, who was pleased to entrust to you the task of teaching Russian grammar, geography and history to his two sons, Fefa and Luzu. You bore with an angelic patience the coarse jokes of Kroupianikoff, as well as the

boorish civilities of his steward, and the foolish tricks of the two scamps your pupils ; and if at times a bitter smile was to be seen on your lips when you were obliged to fulfil the capricious demands of their mother, this tyranny would never elicit the least murmur from you. Also with what ineffable happiness did you enjoy an instant's rest, in the evening, after supper, when, freed at last from your duty and all anxiety, you went and sat near the window and began to smoke, lost in reflection, or eagerly running through the greasy torn leaves of some periodical that had been left there by a government surveyor, a poor devil condemned like yourself to lead a roving life. What sweet emotions you felt when you read a piece of poetry or an interesting novel ! Tears immediately glistened in your eyes, a sweet smile appeared on your lips ; you felt penetrated with an ardent love for humanity, and a love of the beautiful and of the right took possession of your soul, ingenuous as that of a child. You were not at all remarkable, it is true, for your qualities of mind, and you even passed at the University for a very ordinary person ; during lessons you generally gave yourself up to the delights of sleep, and you shone especially by your majestic silence at examination. But who was distinguished among us all by the joy felt at a comrade's success ? It was Avenir. Who had a blind confidence in his friends' merits, praised up their talents, and took up their defence with the greatest zeal ? Still you. To whom were envy and selfishness perfect strangers ? You again. And you thought yourself inferior to men who were not worthy to loosen the latchet of your shoe.

When you took leave of your friends, you were deeply affected ; you were troubled with sad presentiments. They were well founded ; in the world into which you were to go you were not to find a single being to whom you could listen, or whom you could admire and love. The polished seigneurs and the country squires behaved towards you as they did towards all persons of your profession : some were coarse, others even showed a kind of contempt. Your appearance, I admit, did not prepossess one in your favor : you blushed on every occasion, became confused and stammered in answering the most insignificant question. We had hoped that the country would build up your failing health ; but no, you were visibly growing weaker. O my poor friend ! Yet your room looked out on the garden ; in the spring, the cherry-trees, the apple-trees, and the lindens that encircled the house shook

their blossoms even over the volumes and copy-books that covered your table. A little blue silk watch-case hung on the wall opposite your bed; it was a farewell present that a sweet, pleasing German governess with light hair and blue eyes had given to you the day she went away. One of your old Moscow friends came to see you, as he passed, and if he chanced to recite to you a bit of poetry, taken from one of the periodicals of the day, or even one of his own compositions, you listened in rapt attention. But the habitual isolation to which you were condemned, the restraint of the position that you held, and the impossibility of ever being freed from it, the endless autumns and winters of the country, and above all an incurable disease—O my poor Avenir!

I went to see him a short time before he died; he could scarcely walk. The proprietor with whom he was then living, Gour Kroupianikoff, was so good as not to send him away, but he no longer gave him a salary. He had taken another master for Luzu; as to Fefa, he had just entered the *cadets*.¹ Avenir was seated near the window in an arm-chair à la *Voltaire*. The weather was beautiful, although it was well on into the autumn; a pale, clear sky could be seen through the branches of a row of lindens that were entirely stripped of their foliage, though here and there were still a few bright yellow leaves, stirred now and then by the breeze. The ground, on which there had been a heavy frost during the night, was covered with dampness, and the pale grass glistened under the oblique rays of the sun. The air was wonderfully resonant; you could hear distinctly the voices of the laborers at work at the bottom of the garden. Avenir was wrapped up in an old *doukhare*² dressing-gown; a green silk scarf gave to his face a frightful thinness, a cadaverous look. He welcomed me with joy, and, stretching out his hand, began to speak, when a sudden fit of coughing stopped him. I gave him time to compose himself, and sat down at his side. He had on his knees a copy-book full of poetry copied with the greatest care; it was "The Works of Koltsoff." He tapped the book with his hand and smiled. "There is a poet!" he said to me in a subdued tone; and restraining his

1. The pupils of the establishments for military education in Russia are called *cadets*. Only the sons of gentlemen can enter the *corps of cadets*.

2. Clothing that the Russian Tartars of Moscow and Kasan make and peddle throughout Russia.

cough with an effort, he began to recite the following strophe:

"Tell me, are the falcon's wings
Clipped or bound?
Who chased him from the haunts and springs
He circled round?"

I interrupted him; the doctor had expressly forbidden him to talk. I knew how to make him pass a few agreeable moments. Though he had never kept up with the scientific and intellectual movement of the time, Sorokoumoff took pleasure in knowing what was going on. He once took one of his comrades aside and asked him what the great minds of the age were doing; he listened attentively, believed it all, and repeated word for word what he had learned. He took an especial interest in German philosophy. I then began to talk to him of Hegel (it was a long time ago, as you see). Avenir smiled and nodded his approbation. "I understand, I understand. Ah, it is beautiful! it is beautiful!" The childish curiosity of this poor dying and lonely man moved me, I confess, to tears.

Unlike most consumptives, he did not refer to his condition; and he was not at all despondent, and even made no allusion to the fate that awaited him. Mustering all his strength, he began to speak of Moscow, of the friends that he had left there, of Pouchkine, of the theatre, of Russian literature; he spoke of our little merry-makings of old, the ardent discussions in which we engaged at that time, and spoke tenderly of dead friends that we had in common. "Do you remember Dacha?" he said to me at length; "there was a heart of gold! what a nature, and how she loved me! What has become of her? She is doubtless much changed, poor thing!" And I was careful to keep from him any sad news: and why should I tell him, indeed, that his Dacha was now round as a ball; that she lived with some merchants, the brothers Kondatchkoff; that she was covered with paint, and that she cried and disputed from morning till night?

"Might there not be a way," I thought to myself, "of taking him away from here? Perhaps he might yet recover." I began to tell him my views on this subject, but he would not let me finish.

"No, brother," he said to me, "I thank you. No matter where one dies. I shall not go before winter. What good

to disturb every one for nothing? I am accustomed to the house. It is true that this family—”

“They are probably heartless people,” I said to him.

“No,” he answered, “they are not bad; they are inclined to be blockheads. But really I have nothing to complain of. As to the neighbors—one of the proprietors of the canton, Kasatkine, has a daughter, a well-informed, sweet, excellent creature, and not proud—” A fit of coughing would not let him finish. “I would not mind all that,” he continued, after a short pause, “if they would allow me to smoke. But I will not die like this; I shall smoke a pipe, watch me as much as they like!” And here he winked slyly. “Thank God, I have lived long enough; I have known honest men in my life and—”

“You should at least,” I said, interrupting him, “write to your family.”

“What’s the use? They cannot help me. When I am dead, they will know it. Why speak to them about it in advance? Rather than think of that, tell me what you saw abroad.”

I did my best to gratify him; he listened to me with inexhaustible interest. I left the same evening, and ten days after I received from Kroupianikoff the following letter:

“I have the honor of announcing to you by the present letter, my dear sir, that your friend, the student Avenir Sorokoooumoff, who lived with me, died four days ago, at two o’clock in the afternoon, and that he was buried yesterday, at my expense, in the cemetery of my church. In accordance with his desire, I send you the manuscripts and books that you will find enclosed. He possessed twenty-two roubles and a half, which, as well as all his effects, will be sent by my care to the persons of his family, who have a right to this heritage. Your friend died fully conscious; I may even say that he died with a kind of indifference, without being in the least affected, even when I and my family bade him farewell. My wife, Cleopatra Alexandrovna, presents her compliments to you. The death of your friend has naturally unsettled our nerves; I myself am very well, thank God, and I have the honor of being

“Your very humble servant,

“G. KROUPIANIKOFF.”

A great many recollections of the same kind occur to me; but what I have told you must be sufficient. However, I

will add the following. An old maiden lady died in my presence some years ago. The priest who attended her had begun to recite the prayers for the dying, but thinking that the invalid was about to die, he hastened to give her the crucifix to kiss. The worthy lady fell back with a dissatisfied air. "You are too soon, my little father," she said to him, her speech already growing thick; "you still have time." Then she devoutly kissed the crucifix, pushed her hand under her pillow, and gave up the ghost. When they buried her, they found a rouble under her pillow; she had taken precautions in advance, and proposed herself to pay the priest who came to attend her in her last moments.

Yes, the Russians die in a truly strange manner.

CHAPTER VI.

LGOVE.

“LET us go to Lgove,” said Jermolai to me one day,—
 Jermolai I have already introduced to the reader,—
 “we will kill as many ducks as you like.”

Though the wild duck has little value in the eyes of the true sportsman, I accepted for want of a better the proposal made by Jermolai. We were at the beginning of September; the woodcock had not yet appeared, and I cared very little for roaming through the fields for a few partridge. So we started off for Lgove.

Lgove is one of the large villages of the *Steppe*;¹ it boasts of an old stone church with a single dome² and two mills on the Rossota, a little river that runs at a short distance from the highway through great swamps. At about five verstes from Lgove there is quite a large pond, full of reeds. Among the scattered islets that they form in the very middle of the pond an infinite number of wild ducks of every kind live and breed at will. They are to be seen hovering about in little flocks, and at the first shot they rise up in such clouds that the most phlegmatic sportsman involuntarily puts his hand to his hat and exclaims, “Fou-ou!” We began by skirting along the shore; but the duck is endowed with too great an amount of prudence to ever venture so near the land, and even when a stray or careless duckling came within gunshot of us, and fell a victim to its inexperience, our dogs, in spite of the zeal and merit for which they were remarkable, tried in vain to retrieve it at the edge of the pond; they sank into the mud and momentarily ran a risk of hurting their precious noses against the slender

1. A part of Southern Russia, very flat and very fertile.

2. The typical form of the Russian churches is a building with four domes of the same size, with a central dome higher. The form is Oriental, yet some examples are found in the West, and among others at Perigueux, where the cathedral church is built upon this plan.

stems of the reeds that crossed each other in every direction.

"No," said Jermolai, "we can do nothing in this way; we must find a boat. Let us go back to the village."

Scarcely were we on the Lgove road when a miserable-looking setter suddenly bounded out of a clump of willows; he was followed by a man arrayed in a threadbare blue coat, a yellowish waistcoat, and grayish trousers the lower part of which were tucked carelessly into the legs of a pair of boots that were worn down at the heels. He was a sportsman; he carried a single-barrelled gun slung across his shoulders. In accordance with the usage that is common to all the individuals of their kind, our dogs immediately began to sniff, with a ceremony worthy of the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire, at the new specimen of the canine race that was so suddenly presented to them. The new-comer did not appear at ease; he had his tail between his legs, his ears back, and he turned rapidly round and round, snapping. When the person that he preceded approached us, he saluted us with great politeness. He appeared to be about five-and-twenty; his long, light hair, stiff with kvass,¹ hung in straggling rigid locks, and his face, lighted up by a pleasing smile, had a black silk handkerchief bound about it, such as people wear who are suffering from toothache.

"Let me introduce myself to you," he said in a sweet, insinuating voice; "my name is Vladimir, and I am one of the hunters of the country. Having learned of your arrival, and knowing that you were going toward our pond, I decided to come and offer you my services, if they are agreeable to you."

The obliging hunter delivered this little speech in the tone of a prominent actor assuming the part of a first lover. I accepted the offer of his services, and at the end of a few minutes' conversation I had learned his whole history. He was an enfranchised *dvorovi*; after he had learned music in his childhood, he had been a valet; he could read and write, and, as far as I could find out, he had read a few bad novels. Like a great number of people of his description, in our dear country, he now had no profession and was without a sou in the world; the means of living at his dis-

1. The *dvorovi* and peasants make use of this drink to plaster down their hair.

posal could not have been more precarious if he had been condemned to exist on celestial manna. Yet he was a fine talker, and evidently made great pretensions to good-breeding, which would lead one to suppose that he sought the favor of the fair sex, and that the list of his love-conquests was very long, inasmuch as Russian girls are very fond, as is well known, of encouraging eloquence. While continuing his conversation with me about one thing and another, he took care to have me understand that he was received at the house of the proprietors of the neighborhood, and played the game of *préférence*¹ in some town-houses; he even insinuated very adroitly that his circle of acquaintances contained many inhabitants of the capital. I noticed that he had at his disposal a great variety of smiles; that which played over his lips when he listened to some story had an expression of modesty and reserve that became him wonderfully well. Although he rarely took the liberty of contradicting the person with whom he was talking, he knew very well how to give the impression that this silent approbation was in no way caused by an utter want of knowing how to begin, and that if need be he had an opinion of his own as much as any one else. Jermolai, who had no idea of good-manners, thought he could be familiar with him; in answering him, Vladimir affected, on the contrary, an extreme politeness, which a man less polished than Jermolai would have fathomed at once.

"Why do you have your face done up in a handkerchief?" I asked him; "have you the toothache?"

"No," he said; "it is in consequence of an accident, the result of which was very sad for me. I had a friend, a very worthy man, but not a sportsman, such as one often sees. 'My dear friend,' he said to me one fine day, 'please take me shooting with you; my curiosity is excited, and I have a keen desire to know what this exercise is. I could not, of course, refuse my friend's request; I found a gun for him, and we started off together. After roaming through the fields for some hours, we thought we would take a little rest. I sat down under a tree, and he began to practise drilling, and while loading in twelve times, he took aim at me. I begged him not to do so, but as he had had no experience he paid no attention to what I said. The gun went off, and I lost part of my chin and the forefinger of my right hand.'"

1. A game of cards in vogue throughout Russia.

We came to Lgove. Vladimir and Jermolai decided that a boat was indispensable. "Soutchok has a flat-boat," said Vladimir, "but I don't know where it is. We must go and ask him."

"Of whom are you speaking?" I asked.

"A man of the country who is so called," replied Vladimir; and he set out with Jermolai to look for him.

I told him that I would wait for him near the church, and started off in that direction. In examining the tombs in the churchyard, my eyes rested on a broken column blackened from time, and which had on one side the following inscription in French: "Ci-gît Théophile Henri, Comte de Blangy;" on another side, engraved in Russian, "Under this stone rests the body of Count de Blangy, a French subject, born in 1737, died in 1799, at the age of 62;" on a third, "Peace be to his ashes." The fourth side was devoted to a distich that recalled in pompous terms that the Count de Blangy, after being driven from his country by tyrants, had devoted himself successfully in Russia to the education of the young.

I was aroused from the meditation into which the sight of this tomb had plunged me by the arrival of Jermolai and Vladimir, accompanied by the personage that bore the name of Soutchok. He was a man of at least sixty, and he looked like a retired dvorovi; he was barefooted, and every part of his costume gave sign of the deepest misery.

"You have a boat?" I asked.

"Yes, I have a boat," he answered in a dull, broken voice, "but it is not good for anything."

"How so?"

"It is all warped, and the oakum in the holes has fallen out."

"A great misfortune indeed!" replied Jermolai; "they can be stopped up."

"Doubtless," said Soutchok.

"But who are you?"

"I am the seignorial fisherman."

"How is it that your boat is not in condition?"

"Because there are no fish in the river."

"Fish don't like swamp-water," added Jermolai with a knowing air.

"Well, then," I said to Jermolai, "go and get some oakum and put the boat in order. Be as quick as you can."

Jermolai went away.

"The precaution is well taken," I said to Vladimir, "otherwise we might take a plunge into the pond."

"Divine mercy is great," replied Vladimir. "Besides, I don't suppose the pond is deep."

"No, it is not very deep," Soutchok answered with a startled air, as if he had just waked up; "but there is a bottom of mud, and it is full of grass. There are also a few holes here and there."

"But if it is so full of grass," said Vladimir, "we cannot row."

"Use oars in a boat like that? You push it; I will go with you. I have a little pole yonder,—or else we can use a shovel."

"That would not be easy," answered Vladimir; "there are places doubtless where you could not touch bottom with a shovel."

"Indeed," said Soutchok, "perhaps that would not be just the thing."

I sat down on a tomb. Vladimir did the same, but he sat respectfully at a little distance from me. As to Soutchok, he stood with his head bent forward and his hands clasped behind his back, as is usual with Russian servants.

"Have you discharged the duties of fisherman long?"

"Seven years," answered Soutchok, drawing himself up.

"And what did you do before that?"

"Before that I was a coachman."

"Why did you change your occupation?"

"The mistress wished it."

"Who is your mistress?"

"The one who bought us last? Do you know her? Her name is Elena Timofefovna, a stout lady and no longer young."

"Who made a fisherman of you?"

"God knows! She came here one fine day from the estate where she generally lived, near Tamboff, and gave orders to have all the *dvorovi* assemble in the court. Then she came to see us there; some of us kissed her hand, and then all the others did the same. After that she began to ask us questions; she asked each one of us his name, what he did, and what position he held. When my turn came, she asked me, 'And you, what do you do?' 'I am a coachman,' I answered. 'Coachman?' she said; 'a fine coachman you make! But look you here. Coachman, that is not your business; you shall be my fisherman. Cut

your beard.¹ Whenever I come here, it shall be your care to furnish the seignorial table with fish; you understand me.' That's how I became a fisherman. 'And then,' added the mistress, 'don't fail to keep up the pond.' I should like nothing better; but what's to be done?"

"To whom did you belong before that?"

"To Sergueï Sergueïtch Pektereff, a proprietor. He inherited us; but he did not keep us long—ten years in all. It was with him I served as a coachman, but only in the country; in town he had others."

"And you have been a coachman from childhood?"

"Oh no. I became a coachman under Sergueï Sergueïtch. Before that I was a cook, but always in the country, and not in town."

"When then were you made a cook?"

"When we belonged to our master Athanase Néféditch, Sergueï Sergueïtch's uncle. It was he who bought Lgove, and who left it as a heritage to Sergueï Sergueïtch, his nephew."

"From whom did Athanase Néféditch buy you?"

"From Tatiana Vassilievna."

"Who is this Tatiana Vassilievna?"

"She who died a maid last year, near Bolkhoff—I mean near Kharkoff; she was never married. You have not the honor of knowing her? She received us from Vassili Kousmitch, her father, and owned us not such a short time after all—a score of years."

"And you were cook in her house?"

"Yes, at first; then I was *kafechenok*."²

"What occupation is that?"

"In faith I know nothing about it myself, my father. I was employed in the pantry, and was called Antone instead of Kousma. The mistress was pleased so to order."

"Then your true name is Kousma?"

"Yes, Kousma."

"And you kept that occupation all the time that you belonged to this mistress?"

"No, I was also an actor."

"Is it possible!"

1. The dvorovi are generally shaven, even when they are no longer attached to a seigneur; the Great Russian peasant is, on the contrary, very proud of his beard and is careful about cutting it. Though dvorovi, coachmen also wear a beard.

2. Probably from the German *Kaffee-schenken* (to pour out coffee).

"Oh yes, really. Our mistress had fitted up a theatre."

"What rôles did you assume?"

"What did you say, if you please?"

"What did you do at the theatre?"

"Then you don't know that? They took me and made me put on fine clothes; and then I walked about or else I sometimes stood, sometimes sat down, as it happened. They told me, 'You must say this,' and I repeated it. Once I took the part of a blind man; yes, really, they put little peas under my eyelids to make me keep them down."

"What did you do then?"

"Then I was sent back to the kitchen."

"Why were you so degraded?"

"Because my brother ran away."

"What did you do under Tatiana Vassilievna's father?"

"I had different employments. At first I was a *petit Kosak*,¹ then a postilion, gardener, and huntsman."

"Huntsman? really! You looked after the dogs?"

"Yes, I had the care of the dogs. But one day I was nearly killed by falling from my horse, and hurt my mount a little. Our old master, who was very severe, had me beaten, and apprenticed to a shoemaker in town."

"How apprenticed? As you were a huntsman, you could no longer have been a child."

"Yes, I must have been at least twenty."

"At that age you can no longer learn a trade."

"We must believe so, as the master so ordered. But fortunately he died soon after I went away, and I was sent back to the country."

"When then did you learn to be a cook?"

At this question Soutchok raised his little withered face.

"Must that be learned?" he said with a smile; "in the village the women are all good cooks."

"Well, my poor Kousma, you have gone through cruel things in your life. But what can you do as a fisherman, as there are no fish in the river?"

"I don't complain, my father. I thank God for being made a fisherman by my mistress. An old man like myself, Andrew Poupir, was sent to the vats of a paper-mill. 'It was a sin,' my mistress said to him, 'to eat her bread without working.' And yet Poupir relied on favor. His nephew,

1. The seigneurs formerly had a custom of dressing some of their little domestics as Kosaks.

who was employed in the village office,¹ had promised to recommend him to the kindness of his mistress. He recommended him in a pretty way! Yet Poupir threw himself at his nephew's feet in my presence."

"Have you children? Are you married?"

"No, father, I have never been married. Tatiana Vassilievna—God have pity on her soul!—would not let us marry. 'May Heaven preserve me!' she used to exclaim when they asked her permission, 'I have not married myself. What ideas you have! What are you thinking of?'"

"How do you live now? Doubtless you have wages?"

"Wages, father? Oh no; they make me an allowance of provisions, nothing more. But thank Heaven for it. Yes, I am well satisfied. May God give my mistress a long life!"

Jermolai's arrival put an end to our conversation. "The boat is ready," he said abruptly. "Go and look for a pole," he added, addressing the old man, who hastened to obey.

While I was talking with Soutchok, Vladimir gazed at him with an air of pity. "He is a fool," he said to me as soon as he had gone away, "a man entirely unpolished, a peasant; nothing more. You can't even call him a *dvorovi*. All that he has just told you is a pack of boastings. He an actor? Come, now! what do you think of it? Really, all that is not worthy of the kindness that you have shown in listening to him."

We gave our dogs to the coachman Jégoudile, who shut them up in an *isba*, and took our places in the boat. We were not very comfortable; but when out shooting one should not be too particular. Soutchok took his place at the stern of the boat so as to push it; Vladimir and I were seated on a plank in the middle; Jermolai was in the bow. Hardly was the boat unmoored when our feet were soaking in the water; the oakum with which Jermolai had stopped up the holes was evidently insufficient. But the weather was magnificent, the surface of the pond perfectly smooth, and we pushed boldly out. The old fisherman was not wrong; every time that he took his long pole out, the greenish fibres on it showed that the bottom of the pond was covered with water-plants; the large round leaves of the water-lily kept us back. At last we reached the islets which were the object of our expedition, and the sport began. Clouds of ducks,

1. See note on page 75.

startled by our abrupt appearance in their domains, rose noisily up. Shots re-echoed almost incessantly, and it was a pleasure to see the fleeing denizens of these parts suddenly pause in their flight, turn a somersault in the air, and fall back into the water with a splash. It was impossible for us to fish out all the ducks that we killed; some slightly wounded immediately plunged to the bottom of the pond, and in this way escaped us; others that were killed at the first shot were hidden away among the reeds, where even Jermolai's piercing eye could not detect them. However that may be, our booty was more than enough; by evening our boat was full of ducks to the gunwale. To Jermolai's great satisfaction, it was found that Vladimir was far from being a good shot; but every time that he missed he appeared very much surprised, examined his gun, blew into the barrel, and ended in showing us the reason of his awkwardness. As to Jermolai, he gave proof, as he always did, of wonderful skill; and I, as usual, shot rather badly. Soutchok gazed at us with the impassibility of a man who had passed all his life in the service of a seigneur. However, he sometimes cried out, "There, there, another little duck!" and when making this exclamation he rubbed his back by moving his shoulder-blades.¹ The weather was superb; rounded white clouds hovered slowly above us and were reflected in the water; in passing, our boat struck against the narrow stalks of the reeds among which we were steering, and farther on the surface of the pond glistened like a steel plate. We decided to stop shooting and go back to the shore; but a most unforeseen event arose to prevent the execution of this plan.

As we had noticed for some time that the water was rising higher and higher in the boat, Vladimir was entrusted with the task of bailing it out by the help of a ladle that my headhunter had very opportunely taken from a peasant who was attending to something else. Everything went well for some time; Vladimir did not neglect the important task with which we had entrusted him. But as we were about to stop shooting, as if they intended to bid us good-by, the ducks rose up in such great numbers that one had scarcely time to reload. In the excitement of the moment, we neglected to watch our system of navigation. This forgetfulness was nearly fatal. In trying to get possession of a wounded duck that was on the

1. This movement is peculiar to the Russian peasantry.

point of escaping, Jermolai leaned all his weight on the edge of the boat, which bent over, filled with water, and sank majestically to the bottom. We gave a cry of fright, and a few seconds after we were plunged into the water up to our necks, and in the very middle of the ducks that we had had so much trouble to take. I cannot help laughing yet when I recall the pallid faces of my companions in misfortune (probably I myself was not distinguished at that moment by the carnation color of my cheeks). But when the accident happened, I admit that not for an instant had I a thought of joking on our situation. Each of us raised his gun above his head, and Soutchok, from the habit he had of imitating all his masters, also held his pole out of the water.

The first of us who broke silence was Jermolai. "Tfou ! curse it!" he muttered, spitting¹ into the water; "what a ducking! It is you, you old devil, who are the cause of this!" he added angrily, addressing Soutchok; "what kind of a boat do you own?"

"Forgive me, I am to blame," muttered Soutchok with a contrite air.

"And you, you devil," resumed Jermolai, turning to Vladimir, "what were you thinking about? Why didn't you bail out the water? It was you, you—"

But Vladimir had no desire to answer back; he trembled like a leaf; his teeth chattered, and he had the look and smile of an idiot. What had become of his eloquent spirit, his respect for the proprieties, and his feeling of dignity? The cursed boat rocked incessantly under our feet; at the moment we upset, the water seemed as cold as ice, but we soon became accustomed to it. When I had somewhat recovered from my chill, I looked about me: at about ten steps from us, reeds rose up on all sides; in the distance, above this circuit of green, the shore dimly appeared. The situation was critical, I thought. "What is to be done?" I said to Jermolai.

"That's what we must think about," he answered; "it will not do to pass the night here. Here, take my gun, you there," he said to Vladimir, who, without a word, immediately obeyed this imperious command. "I will go and look for a ford," he continued in a confident tone, and as if necessarily there must be a ford somewhere in the pond.

1. A habit that all the Russians of the lower classes have; it is a sign of rage or contempt.

Taking the pole that Soutchok was holding, he waded toward the shore, cautiously sounding the water about him.

"Can you swim?" I said to him.

"No," he cried, as he disappeared behind the reeds.

"Then he will be drowned," remarked Soutchok coldly.

The poor devil, who even at the time of the accident had no other fear but that of having incurred our anger, completely reassured in this respect, had resumed his usual impassibility, and only betrayed his presence by the blowing that he indulged in from time to time.

"Your hunter is exposing himself to no purpose," Vladimir said to me a few moments after.

For about a quarter of an hour Jermolai answered very regularly our frequent calls; then his responses became rarer and rarer, and at last ceased entirely. Vespers sounded in the village; we were silent, and, for fear of betraying our feelings, we even avoided looking at each other. Wild ducks constantly passed above our heads; some seemed inclined to alight near us, but as soon as they saw us they flew precipitately into the air, giving out a hoarse, mournful cry. We began to feel benumbed; it was more than an hour since Jermolai had left us; Soutchok blinked, as if on the point of falling asleep. At last, as we were about losing all hope of seeing him reappear, Jermolai returned.

"Well, what have you found out?" I asked him.

"I have been to the shore," he answered; "I have found a ford. Come."

We immediately prepared to start. But Jermolai could not resign himself to losing the fruit of our shooting; he took a cord from his pocket, and tied all the ducks that were floating about us by the feet; then, taking the end of the cord between his teeth, he gave the signal to start. Vladimir followed him, and then I; Soutchok brought up the rear. The distance that we had to go to reach the edge of the pond was at least a quarter of a verste; Jermolai went forward resolutely and without the slightest hesitation; he had fixed in his mind the slightest bends of the way he was to follow. He cried out to us from time to time, "More to the left; there is a hole," or, "Keep to the right; you will sink in the mud in the left." Sometimes the water came to our eyes, and poor Soutchok, who was the shortest of the four, ran great risks. He lost his footing, struggled, swallowed water, and blew out bubbles. "Come! come!" Jermolai immediately cried to him roughly; and by dint of

paddling, standing on the tips of his toes, and skipping, Soutchok finally reached a place not quite so deep; but even in the most critical moments he never forgot himself, I must acknowledge it, so far as to seize me by the skirt of my coat. We at last reached the bank; we were, as was natural, wet to the skin, covered with mud, and tired out—in a word, in the most pitiable state.

Two hours after we were seated in a barn on the hay; the disorder of our toilet was remedied as well as possible, and we sat down to supper with a fine appetite. The coachman Jégoudile, a man desperately slow and an incorrigible arguer, stood near the door, where he was treating himself generously to the old fisherman's snuff (I have already remarked that in Russia coachmen become acquainted very quickly). Soutchok was taking snuff with a kind of frenzy; he was seized with a giddiness; he spat, he coughed so that he lost his breath, but the undoubted pleasure that he felt compensated, as it seemed, for all the inconveniences. Vladimir was melancholy; he held his head on one side and spoke but little. Jermolaï was cleaning our guns. The dogs were wagging their tails with more and more activity at the sight of the porridge that was being prepared for them; our horses neighed impatiently and were kicking the floor of the next barn. The sun was setting, and its last rays were tinging the horizon with red; the little gilded clouds that covered a part of the sky were more or less like waves or freshly combed fleece. In the village they were singing at the tops of their voices, and now and then a joyous refrain came to our ears.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OFFICE.¹

IT was autumn. I had been wandering over the fields for several hours with my gun over my shoulder, and it is probable that I would not have got back before evening to the highway of Kursk and the inn where I had left my horses, if a fine but very cold rain, which, persistent as an old maid, had pursued me since morning, had not decided me to seek a momentary shelter in some house in the neighborhood. While I was reflecting as to the direction I should take, I saw, at a short distance off, a little hut, very low, with a thatched roof, near a field of peas. I walked up to this shelter, and found there an old man, so emaciated that he recalled to my mind the dying goat that Robinson Crusoe found in one of the grottos of his island. This strange person was crouching down in a corner; he had little, blinking eyes, a dull look, and was chewing with care, like a rabbit, working his under jaw to and fro (the poor devil no longer had any teeth) a dry, hard pea that he was trying in vain to crack. This occupation absorbed him to such a degree that he did not notice me at first.

"Hallo, grandfather!" I cried to him.

He stopped chewing, and, raising his eyebrows, he half opened his eyes and answered me in a hoarse voice, "What is it?"

"Is there any village about here?" I asked him.

But instead of answering me, he began to chew more than ever; he had not understood me. I repeated my question, raising my voice.

"A village?—why do you ask me that?"

"Because it is raining, and I wish a shelter."

"How?"

"I wish to get out of the rain."

1. In Russia they give this name to the office in which are assembled the different clerks entrusted with the management of an estate.

"Yes" he said to me, scratching his sunburnt neck. "Ah! well, you—there is—you have only to take—" he continued, gesticulating at random—"there is—when you are opposite the wood,—when you are there,—you will find a road: but don't take that road; always keep to the right, always to the right, always to the right,—and then you will come to Ananieva."

I had a great deal of trouble to follow his words; the old man expressed himself with difficulty, and the long mustaches that fell over his mouth almost entirely stifled his trembling voice.

"And you, where are you from?" I asked him.

"How?"

"Where are you from?"

"I? From Ananieva."

"And what do you do there?"

"How?"

"What do you do?"

"I am a watchman."

"What are you entrusted to watch?"

"I watch this field of peas."

"Indeed!" I said to him with a smile that it was impossible for me to repress; "but how old are you?"

"God only knows."

"Your sight must be weak?"

"How?"

"You must have very weak sight?"

"Oh yes sometimes I don't hear at all."

"How can you watch this field, then?"

"That is the elders' business."

Elders! I thought.

I stayed for a few moments to gaze at the old man, and the sight of him inspired me with profound pity. Fumbling for a piece of dry bread that was between his shirt and his peasant's jacket, he began to suck it as a child would have done, and his cheeks, already hollow and wrinkled, became still more so. I left him, and went in the direction of the little wood that he had pointed out to me, and when I reached it I kept to the right, always to the right, as he had recommended me to do. I thus came to a large village, in the midst of which was a church built in the new style—that is to say, with columns; a little farther on was the signorinal house, the front of which was likewise decorated with a row of columns. Before going into the village I had

noticed, through the bluish veil with which the fine rain, that still fell, covered all the objects that I could see in the distance, an isba higher than the others and topped with a board roof, at the end of which arose two chimneys. I took this house to be the Starosta's; and in the hope of finding a samovar, sugar and tea, I turned my steps in that direction, with my dog, who was shivering all over. Mounting the steps, I crossed the vestibule and opened the door; but instead of finding myself, as I expected, in the midst of the furniture and household utensils that adorn a peasant's house, I saw several tables covered with papers, two cupboards painted red, inkstands covered with ink, tin sandboxes that must have weighed a *poud*,¹ pens of an immense length, etc. A young man of about twenty, at the most, was seated at one of the tables; his complexion was pale and his skin greasy; his eyes could scarcely be seen, and long locks of hair hung down his cheeks. The collar and the front of the gray nankeen kaftan that he wore were covered with the usual spots.

"What do you want?" he said to me, raising his head like a horse who has been unexpectedly seized by the nose.

"Does the steward live here? or else—"

"This is the seignorial office," said the young man, interrupting me. "I am in attendance. You have not then read the inscription that is above the door? Yet it is plain enough."

"Could I not dry myself? There doubtless must be a samovar in the village?"

"Certainly," answered the young man in the gray kaftan in a tone of importance. "Go to father Timoféi's, or else to the isba of the seigneur's servants, or to Nasar Tarasitchi's, or to Agrafena's, the woman who looks after the henhouse—"

"With whom are you talking like that, fool? You keep me from sleeping, you simpleton!" cried some one in the next room.

"A gentleman has just come in and wants to dry himself."

"Who is the gentleman?"

"I don't know. He has a gun and a dog."

The creaking of a bed was heard in the room from which the speaker's voice came. The door opened and a man of about fifty appeared. He was short, but rather stout, and

1. A weight equivalent to about fifteen kilogrammes.

his appearance denoted uncommon strength; goggle-eyes, fat cheeks, and a crimson complexion gave to his face an expression of prosperity perfectly in keeping with his walk and figure.

"What do you wish?" he asked me. "To dry yourself? This is not the proper place for that."

"I had no idea I was entering a counting-house. But yet I am ready to pay what—"

"You might be allowed, if it is absolutely necessary. Here, will you please come this way?" And he took me into the next room, not the one in which he was when I arrived.

"Will this do?" he said to me.

"Very well; but is there no way of having tea and cream?"

"Oh yes; they shall be brought to you. In the mean while take off your coat and lie down; it will not be long."

"To whom does this village belong?"

"To Madame Losniakoff, Elena Nikolajevna."

He left the room, and I began to examine the place where I was. An enormous leather sofa was placed along the wall that separated me from the counting-house; two chairs, likewise covered with leather, and the backs of which were prodigiously high, stood up majestically on both sides of the only window of the room which overlooked the street. The walls, covered with a green paper with pink designs, were adorned with three enormous oil-paintings. One of them represented a sporting-dog wearing a blue collar with these words: "*Voilà ma consolation.*" At the dog's feet ran a river, on the opposite bank of which, under a pine, sat a hare, with his ears up and a phenomenal tail. In the other picture were represented two old men eating a water-melon; beyond, in the distance, stood a Greek temple, on the portico of which was the inscription, "*Temple du bien-être.*" Finally, the third picture represented a woman lying down and foreshortened; this pleasing person had an enormous throat, red knees, and large feet—features that are much appreciated, as you know, among the Russians. My dog had finally introduced himself, with great effort, under the sofa, and, to judge by the sneezing to which he gave vent for a few minutes, it is probable that his retreat was amply filled with dust. I went to the window. Planks were thrown across the street and were stretched from the counting-house to the seignorial house. This precaution was not useless, for, thanks to the quality of the land, and to the rains, a

thick bed of mud stretched from one end of the village to the other. There was nothing peculiar to be seen in the seignorial courtyard: women in faded calico dresses were running about; servants were walking through the mud and stopped now and then to scratch their backs pensively; the déciatski's horse was tied to a post, and idly switched his short tail, stretching out his neck to gnaw the planks of the wall before which he stood; emaciated turkeys gave out a rallying-cry. A sturdy boy armed with a guitar and seated on the step of a small dilapidated house, probably a bath, was singing a popular love-song.

The stout man who had brought me into the room soon came back.

"They are going to serve you," he said to me with a gracious air.

The young man in the gray kaftan, the writer in attendance, placed on an old card-table a samovar, an enormous tea-kettle, a glass in a broken saucer, and a pot full of cream and a bundle of cracknels as hard as flint. The stout man left the room.

"Is he a steward?" I asked the young man.

"No; he was the head cashier, and now he has been appointed head of the office."

"Have you no steward?"

"No, indeed. There is a Burgomaster, Mikail Vikouloff, but we have no steward."

"Then there must be a manager?"

"Yes, certainly; a foreigner, Karl Karlitch Lindemandol. But he has no authority."

"Who then looks after the estate?"

"The mistress herself."

"Indeed! And there are then many of you in the office?"

The young man reflected. "There are six of us," he answered at length.

"Who are they?"

"First Vassili Nikolaitch, the head cashier; then Pietre, a clerk in the office; his brother John, a clerk like him; another John, likewise a clerk; Koskintine¹ Narkiseff; and then myself—but I won't finish."

"Your mistress has doubtless many servants?"

"I can't say that there are very many."

"How many, about?"

x. Instead of Constantine.

"Altogether I think there must be one hundred and fifty."

"Do you write well?" I asked him after an instant's silence.

The young man smiled with a foolish air, shook his head, passed into the next room, and came back with a leaf of written paper.

"There's my handwriting," he said to me, continuing to smile.

I cast my eyes over this paper; it contained the following in large characters, but in rather a good handwriting:

"ORDER.

"The principal domestic office of the estate of Ananieva to the Burgomaster Mikail Vikouloff.

"No. 209.

"You are enjoined to immediately find out, as soon as you receive this, who passed last night, in a state of drunkenness and in singing improper songs, in the English Garden, and who woke up and disturbed the governess, Madame *Enjeni*, the French lady; what the watchmen¹ were doing, and who at that time was on watch in the garden, and who allowed such disorder. You are ordered to make the necessary inquiries as to what is herein suggested, and to communicate them immediately to the office.

"The Head of the office,

"NIKOLAI KVOSTOFF."

This order bore an enormous seal with a coat-of-arms, above which were these words: "The seal of the principal office of the estate of Ananieva;" and beneath: "To be executed without delay. ELENA LOSNIAKOFF."

"Did your mistress herself sign that?" I asked.

"Certainly; she always condescends to sign. Otherwise the order would be valueless."

"You are now going to send this order to the Burgomaster?"

"He is coming himself to read it, or rather it will be read to him; for he can neither read nor write." Having said this, the clerk was again silent.

"This is not badly written?" he soon resumed.

"It is very well written."

1. During the night the peasants watch by turns about the seignorial dependencies.

"It was not I, I must say, who made this order. No; it is Koskintine's business, and he is very good at such things."

"How? you make draughts, then, for papers of this kind?"

"Certainly; it could not be done in any other way."

"What are your wages?"

"I get thirty-five roubles¹ a year, and five roubles for a pair of boots."

"And are you satisfied?"

"Certainly I am. It is not every one who is in a counting-house. As to me, I must say I have been favored; my uncle was butler."

"You are then satisfied with your condition?"

"Oh yes! To tell you the truth, however," he continued with a sigh, "merchants' clerks are luckier than we. They are much better off with the merchants. Not later than yesterday a merchant of Vénéf was here; I talked with his clerk. They are well off; yes, they are very well off."

"The merchants then pay their clerks better?"

"God help us! A merchant would drive out of doors a clerk who would presume to ask him for a salary. You must live with them without such pretensions as that. They dress you, feed you, provide you with everything; when you please them, they reward you so well that the very best salaries are nothing in comparison. A question of salary indeed! that's not business. The merchant lives simply, in the Russian fashion, like all of us; while travelling, when he takes tea he also treats you to some; you eat what he eats. A merchant—ah! he is not—a merchant is not like a master. A merchant is not capricious; he happens to be angry; he beats you, and all is said. He does not scold; he does not turn you into derision. The master makes your life hard. He is never satisfied; he growls on every occasion, and you can't please him. You bring him a glass of water, or a dish of some sort. 'Ah!' he cries, 'this water smells bad. Ah! what you have given me is bad!' You take it away and bring it back an instant after. 'That's right,' he says, 'that's good; that does not smell bad now.' But mistresses are worse. And the masters' daughters—ah! there is nothing in the world—"

"Fédiouchka!" cried the stout man in the office. The clerk in attendance hastened to answer his call. I finished

1. The sum is equivalent to about seven dollars of our money.

drinking my glass of tea, stretched myself out on the sofa, and fell asleep.

I slept for nearly two hours. When I awoke, I at first thought I would get up. I was seized with a lazy fit. I stayed as I was and again closed my eyes, but it was impossible for me to fall asleep again. They were talking in a low voice on the other side of the wall, in the office; involuntarily I listened to the conversation.

"Yes, really; yes, really," said one of the speakers. "Yes, Nikolaï Érémeitch, that's true. It would not do, indeed, not to carry that on account. Yes, that's right. Humph!" And here he who was speaking began to cough.

"Believe me, Gavrila Antonitch," answered the stout man, "I know how far one can go here; have confidence in me."

"Who should know better than you, Nikolaï Érémeitch?" replied the speaker. "Here, one might say, you are the most important personage. Well, what shall we say? How shall we conclude the business? Allow me to show a little curiosity in regard to this."

"How shall we end it, Gavrila Antonitch? It somewhat depends upon you. But you don't seem to be much interested in it."

"Come, now, Nikolaï Érémeitch; how can you say that? We merchants, when it is a question of buying or selling, we are always ready. You will never find us backward for a trade."

"Eight roubles," said the stout man gravely.

These words were followed by a sigh. "Nikolaï Érémeitch," answered the merchant, "that is a great deal, really."

"No, Gavrila Antonitch, I can't do anything else; I swear to you before God that it is impossible."

The two speakers were silent. I got up without making any noise, and looked through one of the cracks of the partition at what was going on in the office. The stout man had his back to me; he was seated opposite a merchant who was still in the prime of life, but excessively thin, with a pallid complexion. His fingers were buried in his beard, he winked incessantly, and from the way in which his lips twitched one would have thought that he was always on the point of speaking.

"The harvest will probably be very good," he said at length. "Everywhere I have been the corn is magnificent,

especially at Varoněj; every one believes, it seems to me, that the crops will be of the best quality."

"Yes, the corn is fine," answered the head of the office; "but you know very well, Gavriła Antonitch, that the autumn does not always make good what the spring promises."

"That's very true, Nikolai Érémeitch. Everything depends on God's goodness. The observation that you just made is perfectly true. But I think that your guest is awake."

The stout man turned round and listened. "No," he said, "he is sleeping. But yet one might, indeed—I heard him approach the door. No, he is asleep," he added, going back to his place.

"Well, Nikolai Érémeitch," resumed the merchant, "we must, however, finish this up. Come! I agree to it, I agree to it,"—and in saying these words he winked more than ever. "Agreed for two gray and a white.¹ You must accept this: and yonder" (he nodded to the seignorial house) "the price will be six roubles and a half. Is it done? Give me your hand on it."

"Four gray," answered the steward.

"No, three."

"Four gray less a white."

"Three, Nikolai Érémeitch."

"Well, three and a half; not a kopek less."

"Three, Nikolai Érémeitch."

"You are joking, Gavriła Antonitch."

"I have never seen so obstinate a man!" muttered the merchant between his teeth. "I would have done better with the mistress herself."

"Do as you like," answered the stout man. "You should have thought of that some time ago. Why do you give yourself so much trouble? You are indeed right."

"Come, come, Nikolai Érémeitch. How you fly out! Don't you see that I am joking?"

"No, I advise you—"

"Come, now! calm yourself, it is a joke: must I repeat it? Let it be as you wish. I give three and a half."

"I should have kept to four; but I am a fool. I was in too much of a hurry," said the stout man with a movement of rage.

1. Bills are distinguished in Russia by their color. Gray bills are worth 200 roubles, and the white 100.

"Come, say no more about it, Nikolai Éremèitch; over there it is six and a half."

"It's a bargain,—six and a half."

"Good! Give us your hand, Nikolai Éremèitch."

The merchant struck the stout man's hand with his five fingers spread apart. "And thanks be to God!" he added, rising. "So, father Nikolai Éremèitch," he said to him soon after this, "I am going yonder to announce it to the mistress, and I shall tell her we have agreed, Nikolai Éremèitch, and that we have struck a bargain for six roubles and a half."

"Don't neglect to do so, Gavrila Antonitch."

"Now, please take this."

The merchant gave to the clerk a little package of papers; then bowed to him, raised his head, took his hat between his two fingers, shrugged his shoulders, gave a wavy motion to his whole body, and left the room making his boots creak, which with men of this class is, as one knows, very good style.

When he had gone, Nikolai Éremèitch approached the wall, and I knew by his gestures that he was counting the notes that the merchant had just given him. But at that moment a head of red hair with an enormous pair of whiskers appeared at the door.

"Well, what is it?" it asked. "Is everything all right?"

"Everything is all right."

"How much?"

The stout man shook his hand impatiently and pointed to the room where I was.

"Ah, well," replied the head, and it disappeared.

The clerk sat down at the table, opened a register, took an *abacus*¹ and began to move the beads, not making use of his forefinger, but of his middle one: this was more correct.

The clerk in attendance entered.

"What do you wish?"

"Cidor has come from Galaplek."

"Ah, well; tell him to come in. Wait! wait! first go and see whether the strange master is awake."

The clerk came cautiously into my room. But I had had time to put my head on the game-bag that I used as a pillow, and to close my eyes.

"He is asleep," he said, shutting the door again.

1. A frame the interior of which is filled with beads of ivory or bone strung on brass wires. The Russians and Orientals use them to count with.

The stout clerk began to mutter.

"Come," he resumed, "call Cidor."

I again took up my position of observation.

The peasant who came into the room could not have been more than thirty; he was a robust man, of gigantic height, with very red cheeks, chestnut hair, and a curly beard. He crossed himself before the images, saluted the head of the office, took his cap in both hands, and drew himself up to his full height.

"Good-day, Cidor," the clerk said to him, still moving the beads of the abacus.

"Good-day, Nikolaï Érémeitch."

"Well, then! how are the roads?"

"Good, Nikolaï Érémeitch," answered the peasant slowly and in a low tone; "not very muddy."

"Is your wife well?"

"She is not very well."

The peasant sighed and came forward a step.

The clerk put his pen behind his ear and blew his nose.

"What have you come here for?" said the clerk, putting his handkerchief into his pocket.

"Well, you see, Nikolaï Érémeitch, they ask us for carpenters."

"Well, what of it? Haven't you any?"

"Why shouldn't we have them, Nikolaï Érémeitch? The village is in the middle of the woods, every one knows. But harvest-time is approaching."

"Yes, that's true. You ask nothing better than to work for others; but when it is a question of working for your mistress, that's a different thing. Why, it is all the same thing."

"The work is the same, it is true, Nikolaï Érémeitch; but when—"

"Well, what?"

"The pay is hardly—I will say—"

"Indeed? They never have enough! Come, go!"

"And what is more, Nikolaï Érémeitch, there is not a week's work, and the men are kept for an entire month. Now materials are wanted, now you are sent into the garden to clean the walks a little."

"Well, since your mistress is pleased to order it, it must be obeyed without remark."

The peasant was silent and stood still for some minutes, resting now on one foot, now on the other. The clerk

bowed his head and began to count the beads of the abacus with more rapidity than ever.

"Our—peasants, Nikolai Éremèitch," at last resumed Cidor, hesitating; "you will please, then—there are here—there are—"

While speaking he drew from his pocket a packet done up in a napkin with a fringe and red designs on it.

"Come, what are you doing? are you mad?" said the stout clerk hastily. "Go away; go to my isba," he continued, rudely pushing the amazed peasant in the direction of the door. "Ask for my wife. She will give you tea. I will come immediately; go away. Don't be afraid, I say, but go away."

The peasant left the office.

"What a bear he is!" added the stout clerk with an angry air; then he shook his head and began to count.

Suddenly cries re-echoed in the yard and on the porch. "Kronpiane! Kronpiane!" they cried, "who will knock him down?" A few minutes after there came into the office a short, strange-looking man. His complexion was pallid, his look fixed, and his nose very long, and he was full of assurance. His costume was very simple: an old wine-colored coat in which he was wrapped up was adorned with a cotton-velvet collar, and the buttons were scarcely perceptible. He had a load of wood on his back. About him pressed five or six *dvorovi* who were crying at the top of their voices, "Kronpia! Kronpia will hold out! He has just been appointed fireman! fireman!"¹ But the man in the wine-colored coat was in no way disconcerted by these noisy manifestations; he did not pay the least attention to them. Advancing with regular steps to the stove, he threw down the bundle that he carried, stood up again, took a snuff-box out of his pocket, opened his eyes wide, and began to fill his nose with bad Russian snuff mixed with ashes.

At the moment that the procession by which the new-comer was followed had come into the room, the stout clerk started up frowning; but as soon as he learned the cause of this hubbub he smiled and simply recommended silence, in order that they should not wake, he said, a hunter who was sleeping in the next room.

"Who is the hunter?" several of the crowd asked at once. "A seigneur,—ah!"

1. A servant of the lowest degree, especially entrusted with firing up the stoves in the seigneur's house or its outbuildings.

"They can shout as much as they like," said the man in the wine-colored coat, opening his arms; "what is that to me, provided they don't touch me? I have just been appointed fireman."

"Fireman! fireman!" cried the men who escorted him, shouting with laughter.

"The mistress has ordered it," he replied, shrugging his shoulders. "Your turn will come, the rest of you. You will have to look after the pigs. Besides, I am a tailor, and a good tailor; I learned my trade from the best tailors of Moscow, and I have worked for Generals. No one can say that this is not so. And you, what makes you so proud?—tell me. Are you not eaters of the bread of others, living at the expense of the seigneur? Answer. You are only good-for-nothings, loafers; nothing more. Let them give me my liberty,—me; I would not die of hunger; I should not be ruined. Let them give me a passport;¹ I would pay a good rent, and the masters would be satisfied with me. But you? You would be ruined, like a lot of flies, and that's all."

"And what are you raving about?" retorted one of the men; he was a tall fellow marked with small-pox, with his coat out at the elbows, and a red scarf about his neck. "You have had a passport; but the masters didn't get a kopek's rent from you, and you could not economize a bit; your legs could scarcely bring you back here, and since then you have had nothing on your back but that ragged coat."

"How can it be helped, Konstantine Narkisitch?" Kronpiane said to him. "Love was the cause of it; that's what ruined me, destroyed me. You have no right to judge, since you have not been through it."

"In love! and with whom? You have found something beautiful indeed! A true monster."

"No; don't say that, Konstantine Narkisitch."

"Do you wish to make us believe it? I have seen her; last year I saw her at Moscow, with my own eyes."

"Last year, indeed, she had somewhat deteriorated," said Kronpiane, "I admit."

"No, gentlemen," replied in his turn, in a contemptuous and careless tone, a thin, slender man whose face was covered with pimples, but who was curled and pomaded with care,—

1. The seigneurs have the right of giving to their servants passports which authorize them to travel abroad, on condition of an annual rent in cash.

probably a valet,—“Kronplane Afanacitch must sing us his little song. Come, sing it for us, Kronplane Afanacitch!”

“Yes! yes!” cried all the others. “Ah! Alexander, that’s the thing. Begin! Come, sing, Kronpia. Bravo! Alexandra.” Sing, then!”

“This is not the place to sing,” answered Kronplane firmly; “we are in the seignorial office.”

“What difference does that make to you, as you seem to be aiming at a clerk’s place?” Konstantine answered roughly; “that’s the truth!”

“Everything depends on the mistress,” answered the poor devil.

“See that! He has no higher aim than that! Upon my word! Ah! ah! ah!”

These noisy exclamations continued for some minutes; several of the audience jumped and gambolled about the fireman. One of the most aggravating was a young man of fifteen or sixteen, probably a son of some aristocrat among the flunkies; he was distinguished among them by a waistcoat with brass buttons, and a light blue scarf; his little stomach was already beginning to be round.

“Listen to me, Kronplane,” said, with an important air, Nikolai Érémeitch, whom this scene had made cheerful. “It is a sad occupation, that of fireman. Admit it: there is no work that is not preferable to that.”

“It is possible, Nikolai Érémeitch,” answered Kronplane. “But you are now our head of the office. You have also been in disgrace; you have lived like any one else in a peasant’s isba.”

“Be careful of what you say,” the stout clerk quickly answered. “You don’t understand a joke, fool; you should take kindly to those who trouble themselves with an idiot like you.”

“It slipped out, Nikolai Érémeitch. Forgive me—”

“Learn to hold your tongue.”

But here the door again opened, and a little Kosak came into the office. “The mistress is asking for you,” he said to the head clerk.

“Who is with her?” he asked.

“Alcinia Mikitchna and a merchant of Vénéf.”

“I will go to her immediately. And you, brothers,” he

1. The *dvorovi* often give, as in this case, a feminine termination to men’s names; they think it very piquant.

added hastily, addressing the *dvorovi*, "you had better leave here, with the new fireman. If, by chance, the German¹ should come in while passing by, he would bring a complaint against you."

The stout clerk arranged his hair, coughed behind his hand, which was almost entirely covered by his sleeve, and, after buttoning his coat, went to his mistress. *Kronpiane* and his crowd followed him. My old acquaintance, the clerk in attendance, was the only one left in the office; he began to mend the pens, and finally fell asleep. Profiting by this happy circumstance, some flies came and walked over his mouth; a gnat alighted on his brow, and, symmetrically spreading its long legs, slowly buried its long sting in the flabby flesh of its victim. The red head that had already shown itself at the door of the office reappeared again, gave a look into the room, and entered followed by the rest of an individual who was not much favored by nature.

"Fediouchka! I say, Fediouchka! He is always sleeping!" said this new personage.

The clerk in attendance opened his eyes and got up.

"Is Nikolai Érémeitch with the mistress?"

"Yes, Vassili Nikolaïtch."

"Ah! ah!" I said to myself, "this is the chief cashier."

This higher clerk began to walk up and down, or rather to wander into all the corners of the room, for he was like a cat. An old black coat with long, narrow skirts hung loose on his back; he kept one of his hands against his chest, applied the other constantly to the fur collar that was about his neck, and accompanied this gesture with a spasmodic movement of his head. He wore goat-skin boots, and placed his foot on the ground with so much caution that the sounds of his steps could hardly be heard.

"The proprietor Jagouchkine asked for you to-day," said the clerk."

"Humph! he asked for me? What did he say?"

"He said that he would go on to *Tioutiouref's* and wait for you there. 'I want to see Vassili Nikolaïtch,' he said to me, 'on business,' but did not say what it was, 'Vassili Nikolaïtch knows what it is about,' he added."

"Humph!" said the chief cashier, and he went to the window.

"Is Nikolai Érémeitch in the office?" cried some one in

1. In Russia the stewards are almost all Germans; hence the designation.

the vestibule. A few minutes after, a tall man, whose face was masculine and expressive, though his features were very irregular, crossed the threshold. He was very neat-looking, and he seemed much irritated.

"He is not here, then?" he asked, after running his eye over every part of the room.

"Nikolaï Érémeïtch is with the mistress," answered the cashier. "What do you wish? Tell me, Pavel Andreïevitch; you can trust me. What do you wish of him?"

"What do I wish? You want to know what I wish?"

The cashier shook his head with a troubled air.

"I wish to give him a lesson, the miserable wretch, the infamous slanderer! Yes, I will teach him—"

The new-comer stopped, bursting with anger, and threw himself into a chair.

"What's the matter with you? What's the matter, Pavel Andreïevitch? Calm yourself! Are you not ashamed? Is it of Nikolaï Érémeïtch that you presume to speak like that? How can you do so?"

"What's that to me? What do I care that he is put at the head of the office! Ah, yes; they have chosen well! I can say it: they have let the goat into the garden."

"Be silent! be silent, Pavel Andreïevitch! Think no more of it. It is foolish!"

"Come, master tom-cat; he is beginning to draw in his claws. I will wait for him," replied Pavel with redoubled anger, and striking the table. "But here he is condescending to come in this direction," he added, looking through the window. "Speak of the wolf and you see his tail. Will you be kind enough to come this way?" And he arose.

Nikolaï Érémeïtch came into the office. His face was beaming; but it became somewhat darker when he saw Pavel.

"Good-day, Nikolaï Érémeïtch," said Pavel in a very significant tone, and advancing slowly towards him, "good-day."

The chief clerk did not answer. The merchant appeared on the threshold.

"Why don't you deign to answer me?" resumed Pavel. "That is not the way to go to work. Insults and shouts are of no use. Will you please tell me in a friendly way, Nikolaï Érémeïtch, why you persecute me, why you drive me to desperation? Come, answer!"

"This is not the place to explain," at last said the head of the office, not without showing a certain emotion; "nor the time," he added. "But what astonishes me is that you should take it into your head that I wish to persecute you. How could I persecute you? Be so kind as to tell me; you are not under my orders in the office."

"There would be nothing wanting but that," replied Pavel. "What is the use of dissimulating as you are doing, Nikolaï Érémeitch? You understand me well enough."

"No, I don't understand you."

"I beg your pardon, you do understand me."

"No, before God, I don't understand you."

"You dare take your oath to it? If you do, I will ask you in my turn if you have no fear of God. Come! tell me why you make life unbearable for that poor girl? What do you want of her?"

"Of whom are you speaking, Pavel Andrelevitch?" asked the stout man, feigning surprise.

"Mind that! He does not know her! I am speaking of Tatiana. Fear the justice of God, and do not be revengeful. You ought to be ashamed: you are married; you have children almost as large as I,—and I, that is another thing—I wish to be married; my intentions are honorable."

"What is my crime, Pavel Andrelevitch? The mistress forbids you to marry; such is her seignorial will. I have nothing to do with all that."

"You have nothing to do with that, you say? Ah! you dare maintain that! Perhaps you have not a secret understanding with that old witch? You have no idea of slandering, eh? You do not spread all kinds of infamous reports about this girl? It is not perhaps thanks to you that she has been transferred from the laundry to the kitchen as a washer of dishes? It is not perhaps owing to you that she is beaten and wears a dress of zatrapas? Shame on you, at your age! Don't forget that you are constantly threatened with a stroke of apoplexy. You are likely at any moment to be called to appear before your God."

"You are in a fair way to insult me, Pavel Andrelevitch! I doubt if you will be long in a position to do so."

At these words Pavel could no longer restrain himself.

"How! he dares to threaten me!" he cried with fury. "You think, then, I am afraid of you? No, brother, you are mistaken! What have I to fear? I can earn my bread

anywhere. You—that is another thing; you can only live here on calumnies and robberies.”

“There is one who has not a bad opinion of himself,” said the stout clerk, interrupting him, at length beginning to lose patience. “A *ferchel*,¹ nothing more; a miserable little dispenser of drugs! But to hear him,—ah! he is an important man!”

“Yes, a *ferchel*; but without this *ferchel* before long your whole manor would be in the cemetery. Did the devil inspire me to heal you?” he added between his teeth.

“You pretend to have healed me,—you?” replied the clerk quickly. “No, you wished to poison me; you gave me aloes to take.”

“Well, what then? Aloes were the only thing that would act on you.”

“The medical direction,” continued Nikolai, happy to have thus turned away Pavel’s attacks, “has forbidden the use of aloes; that is why I shall bring a complaint against you. You wished to kill me, that is certain; but God would not allow it.”

“Come, gentlemen! come, enough of this!” said the cashier in his turn.

“Silence!” cried the clerk. “He wished to poison me, do you understand that?”

“How probable! Listen, Nikolai Érémeitch,” resumed Pavel with an accent of despair; “I beg you for the last time. You have driven me to extremities; it is impossible to endure any more. Leave us in peace; do you understand me? If not, I take God to witness, a misfortune will happen to one of us two; you may be sure of that.”

“I am not afraid of you,” cried the clerk, who was getting more and more irritable. “Do you hear me, you greenhorn? I got the better of your father; I broke his horns for him; let that serve you as a lesson.”

“Don’t speak to me of my father.”

“Indeed! I have no orders to receive from you.”

“I repeat, don’t speak of it.”

“And I repeat to you not to forget yourself. However necessary you believe yourself to be at the house, if they must choose between us, it is not you who will remain, my little pigeon. No one is allowed to rebel.”

Pavel trembled with rage.

1. Servant or bourgeois attached to the government hospitals to acquire a smattering of medicine.

"The girl Tatiana was treated as she deserved. Wait a little; she will have a taste of many other—"

Pavel threw his arms out in the direction of the clerk.

The clerk rolled heavily upon the floor.

"Let him be thrown into prison! Let irons be put on him!" he cried with a roar, and trying to rise.

I have not the courage to describe the end of this scene; I fear I have already said too much for the reader. I returned home the same day. A week after, I learned that Madame Losniakof had kept Pavel and Nikolai in her service, but that she had exiled Tatiana. It appeared that the girl's services were no longer necessary.

CHAPTER VIII.

KARATAIEF.

ABOUT five years ago I chanced to pass nearly an entire day, at the end of autumn, in a post-house on the road from Moscow to Toula. There were no horses to be had. I had been out shooting, and was rash enough to send away my carriage. The master of the post-house, a slovenly old man, with hair covering his face to his nose, and little sleepy eyes, answered all my complaints and entreaties with a short growl, slamming the door angrily, as if he cursed his lot; and when he appeared on the porch, it was to apostrophize the *iamchtiks*,¹ who were creeping along through the mud with heavy *dongas*² under their arms, or were sitting on a bench yawning and every now and then scratching their heads, without paying any great attention to the exclamations that anger called forth from their master. I had already taken tea two or three times, tried several times to go to sleep, and glanced over all the inscriptions that covered the walls and blinds of the room. I felt bored to death. While I was silently gazing, with real despair, at my carriage, the shafts of which were still in the air, the sound of a bell was heard, and a little *téléga* drawn by three tired horses stopped before the porch. The new arrival jumped out, crying, "Come, quick! horses!" and entered the room. The master of the post's answer, "There are no horses," plunged him, as usual, into a state of stupefaction, and I had time to examine him from head to foot with the eager curiosity of a man who is very much bored. He appeared to be about thirty. The small-pox had left ineffaceable traces on his yellowish withered face, which had a copperish reflection that produced a disagreeable impression; his long bluish-black hair fell in locks on his collar, and in front was carefully curled; his little swollen eyes were expression-

1. Peasants entrusted with carrying passengers.

2. A round piece of wood that unites the shafts and rises above the horse's head.

less; a few hairs stood out on his upper lip. As to his costume, it was that of those dissipated proprietors who haunt horse-fairs; he wore a rather dirty tunic, a faded blue silk scarf, a waistcoat with metal buttons, and gray trousers so large that the ends of his dirty boots were scarcely visible. I was not long in finding out that the new-comer smelt strongly of tobacco and brandy. Finally, his large, red fingers, that were almost entirely hidden by the long sleeves of his tunic, were adorned with silver rings made at Toula. Persons of this description are not uncommon in Russia, and it is always rather disagreeable to find one's self in close proximity to them. But in spite of the prejudice with which I regarded him, I could not help acknowledging with a certain satisfaction that his tired features expressed recklessness and good-nature.

"There is some one here who has been waiting for more than an hour," said the master of the post-house, indicating me.

More than an hour, indeed! The rascal is evidently making fun of me, I thought.

"Perhaps the gentleman is not in such a hurry as I am," answered the traveller.

"As to that, we know nothing about it," said the master of the post-house abruptly.

"Is it really true that it is quite impossible to have horses?"

"It is impossible. There is not a single horse in the stable."

"In that case, please warm up a samovar. I will wait; there is nothing else to be done."

The new arrival sat down on a bench, threw his hat on the table, and passed his hand through his hair.

"You have already had tea?" he said to me.

"Yes."

"Would it not be agreeable to you to begin again, so as to keep me company?"

I consented. An enormous samovar reappeared again, for the fourth time, on the table. I took a bottle of rum out of my bag. I was not mistaken: the new-comer belonged to the class of small proprietors. His name was Peter Pétrovitch Karataief.

The conversation began. Half an hour had not gone by before he had already told me his whole history with the most perfect frankness.

"Now I am on my way to Moscow," he said to me, finishing his fourth glass of tea. "I have nothing more to do in the country."

"How so?"

"Yes, nothing. My fortune is impaired; I have ruined my peasants; I must acknowledge it. We have had bad seasons, the harvest has failed, and then what can I do? Besides," he added mournfully, turning away his eyes, "I am a sad manager."

"Really?"

"Oh yes; good proprietors manage differently. Come," he said to me, leaning his head on his shoulder and sucking the end of his pipe, "you thought, I am sure, when you saw me, that I was—how shall I say it?—well, no—I will tell you the truth. I received rather a bad education; yes, for want of means. Pardon the frankness of my words; besides—"

He did not finish, but waved his hand. I hastened to assure him that he was mistaken, that I was very happy to have met him, etc. As I finished, I thought I ought to add that I did not think it necessary to possess very extended knowledge to be a good proprietor.

"Yes," he answered; "we agree as to that. But yet one must be adapted to it. There are people who can do anything and who always come out right; but I— Per- mit me to ask you—do you live at Petersburg or at Mos- cow?"

"I am from Petersburg."

He blew a long column of smoke from his nostrils.

"I am going to look for a place at Moscow."

"What do you intend your future career to be?"

"I don't know; that will depend upon circumstances. I must admit I am somewhat afraid of the prospect: it is easy to get into a scrape. I have always lived in the country; I am accustomed to it, you know. But what can I do? Necessity—oh, if it were not for that!"

"You will have the advantage of living in a large town."

"In a large town? Yes, but I don't know really whether I shall like it. Yet I don't know; it is possible. I doubt, however, whether one can live in town as pleasantly as in the country."

"Is it possible, then, for you to stay in the country?"

He sighed. "It is impossible. My property no longer belongs to me, so to speak."

"Really?"

"Yes; there is an honest man yonder—a neighbor—you understand; a note—"

Poor Peter Pétrovitch passed his hand over his face, became pensive, and shook his head despairingly.

"How can it be helped? Yet I must admit," he added after a pause, "that I have no right to blame any one; I alone am to blame, I like good living; yes, may the devil take me! I am fond of good living."

"Then you led a merry life in the country?"

"I must tell you," he answered slowly, looking fixedly at me, "that I had a dozen couples of greyhounds that were almost unequalled" (he pronounced this last word in a shrill voice). "They would stop a hare as quick as a flash; and as to wolves and foxes, they—they were very serpents, asps. I also had famous harriers. But that is all over; I don't wish to deceive you. I likewise shot, and had a dog named Countess who pointed in an extraordinary manner: she had a nose such as one seldom comes across. When, on coming to a moor, I said to her, 'Go seek!' and she did not start something, I was sure that any one else would beat the moor with ten dogs with the same result. And how well trained she was! You could give her a piece of bread with your left hand, saying to her, 'A Jew has bitten it:' she would not touch it. But if you gave it to her with the right, saying to her, 'The young lady has tasted of it,' she would take it and eat it instantly. I kept one of her puppies; it was also a fine animal, and I wished to take it to Moscow; but one of my friends asked me for it, as well as for my gun. He said to me, 'See here, brother, yonder at Moscow they have no use for such things. Yonder you will have something else to do, brother.' I ended by giving him the little dog as well as the gun. All such things are for the country."

"But you can shoot when you live at Moscow."

"No, what's the use? I did not know how to manage. I must know how to suffer. Let us say no more about it. But, by your leave, living at Moscow is very dear?"

"Oh no; not so very dear."

"Not very dear? But tell me, pray, are there Bohemians at Moscow?"

"What Bohemians do you mean?"

"I mean Bohemians who frequent the fairs."

"Yes, there are some."

"Then so much the better. I like Bohemians; yes, may the devil take me! I like them."

A fierce joy shone in Peter Pétrovitch's eyes. But he suddenly moved about on the bench, then became pensive, hung his head, and stretched out to me his empty glass.

"Give me some of your rum," he said.

"But there is no more tea."

"That's no matter; give me some without tea. Bah!"

Karataïef crossed his arms on the table, and leaned his head on them. I gazed at him in silence; I expected to hear him utter some melancholy exclamations, or even see him burst into tears, as men who are intoxicated often do. But he raised his head again, and I was struck by the profound sadness that his face expressed.

"What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing; a remembrance of the good times; a story—I will tell it to you. But I fear it will bore you."

"What an idea!"

"Yes," he continued, sighing, "there are circumstances—as, for example, that which happened to me. I would tell it to you if you cared to hear. But really—"

"Go on, my dear Peter Pétrovitch."

"Well, then, I will. This is the adventure that—how shall I say?—that happened to me. I was living in the country, and suddenly a young girl took my fancy. Oh! indeed an adorable young girl—beautiful, intelligent, and good. Her name was Matrèna. She was a girl of the lower class; that is—you know—a serf. But she did not belong to me, and that was the worst of it. As I have just told you, I fell in love with her. The story is really curious: I also pleased her. But soon Matrèna began to beg me to buy her. I had already thought of it. I must tell you that she belonged to a very rich old woman who lived about fifteen verstes from my country-place. Well then, one fine day, as they say, I had three good horses put into my drochki; my shaft-horse trotted—an Asiatic such as one seldom sees; I had given him the name of Lampourdas. I dressed myself in my best and went to see Matrèna's mistress. I arrived, and found Matrèna at a turn in the road; she wished to speak to me, but she simply kissed her hand and went away. I entered the ante-room and asked, 'Is your mistress at home?' A tall youth, a lackey, answered me: 'Who shall I say wishes to see her?' I replied, 'Go and tell your mistress that the proprietor Karataïef desires to speak with her about something important.' The lackey left the room. I remained where I was, and said to myself, 'What will be the result of this? The hussy will

doubtless ask me a devil of a price, rich as she is; perhaps as much as five hundred roubles.' At last the lackey came back; he begged me to follow him. I went with him into the drawing-room. A little yellow old woman, continually blinking, was seated in an arm-chair. 'What do you wish of me?' she said. I thought it proper to tell her that I was happy, as they say, to make her acquaintance. 'You are mistaken,' she answered; 'I am not the proprietress, but one of her relatives. What do you wish?' I said that it was with the proprietress I wished to speak. 'Maria Ilinitchna does not receive to-day; she is ill. What do you wish?' 'There's no help for it,' I thought; 'I must tell her my business.' The old woman listened to what I had to say. 'Matrèna? Who is this Matrèna?' 'Matrèna Fédorovna, Koulik's daughter.' 'Fedor Koulik's daughter? How do you happen to know her?' 'It was by chance that I made her acquaintance.' 'And she knows your intentions?' 'Yes.' The old woman was silent. 'Ah!' she resumed, 'I will teach her, the jade!' These words surprised me, I admit. 'Why so? I am ready to give whatever you say.' The old witch hissed with rage, 'A fine thing! we have no need of your money! I will give her a lesson, a good lesson. She will remember it.' The old woman began to cough; she was choking with rage. 'So she is not well off with us, the she-devil? Ah! may the Lord forgive me!' This was a little too much, and I burst out in my turn, 'Why do you threaten this poor girl? what fault has she committed?' The old woman crossed herself: 'Ah! Lord God! Have I no authority over my own people?' 'But she is not yours.' 'As to that, my dear sir, Maria Ilinitchna knows upon whom she can rely; it is not your business. Your Matrechka will know immediately to whom she belongs; I will recall it to her mind.' I was on the point, I admit, of rushing at this cursed old woman; but the remembrance of Matrèna stopped me, and I let my hands fall again. I was quite upset, and there was reason, you must admit. I began to persist with the old woman. 'Ask me,' I told her, 'whatever you like.' 'But what do you wish to do with her?' 'She pleases me, my mother; make allowance for my position, and let me kiss your hand.' The old jade let me do so; I kissed her hand. 'Come,' she muttered, 'I will tell Maria Ilinitchna about it; we shall see what she will say to it. Come back in a few days.'

"I returned home very uneasy. I began to understand that I had made a mistake; I should not have confessed my affection. But it was too late now. At the end of a few days I again went to see Matrèna's mistress. They showed me into her sitting-room. It was full of flowers and very comfortable; the proprietress was in a very peculiar arm-chair, her head leaning on a cushion. At her side was the same relative who had received me the first time, and a red-faced young lady with a large mouth and a green dress,—a companion, probably. The old woman said to me in a whining tone, 'Will you please be seated?' I sat down. She began to question me about my age, my future plans, and this with an important air. I answered fully. The old woman took a handkerchief from the table and began to fan herself. 'Katerina Kasperovna,' she at length said to me, 'has told me of your wishes; yes, she has told them to me. But I have laid it down as a rule,' she said, 'not to allow my people to serve elsewhere. It is not proper; and besides, the order of the house would suffer. So you had better trouble yourself no more about it; you will only lose your time.' 'It does not trouble me at all; but Matrèna Fédorovna is perhaps of no use to you?' 'No,' she said, 'I do not need her.' 'But, then, why will you not let me have her?' 'Because it does not suit me; that's all. I have decided,' she said, 'to have her taken to a village of the Steppe.' This news struck me like a thunder-clap. The old woman added a few words in French to the young woman in green, who then left the room. 'I am,' she said, 'a woman of principles; besides, my health is poor, and every trouble is bad for me. You are young; I, who am old, have the right to give you advice. You had much better think of settling down, of marrying, of finding a good match; if rich heiresses are rare, there are plenty of poor but good girls who would suit you.' While she was speaking to me about marriage, I, who understood nothing she said, looked at her in a bewildered way; the thought of a village in the Steppe never left my mind. 'I marry? Go to the devil with—'"

Peter Pétrovitch stopped abruptly, and looked me in the face.

"You are not married?"

"No."

"I was sure of it.—I could stand it no longer. 'Come, mother, what nonsense you are talking! A question of

marriage, indeed! I came to know whether you would or would not give me the girl Matrèna.' The old woman began to cry out, 'Ah! he makes me ill; ah! send him away! ah!' Her relative ran to her, apostrophizing me. The old woman began to groan. 'What have I done to deserve this?' she said. 'Am I not, then, mistress in my own house? Ah! ah!' I seized my hat and fled like a madman from the room.

"Maybe you will blame me," continued Peter Pétrovitch, "for becoming so strongly attached to a girl of low birth. I will not try to justify myself in any way. What was I to do? I loved that girl to a degree that I thought of her day and night. I was on the rack. I reproached myself for having brought such trouble on that poor innocent creature. When I thought of her as a peasant, looking after the geese by her mistress's order, and exposed to the insults of a Starosta, heavy-fisted, with tarred boots, a cold perspiration started out over my whole body. At last, being no longer able to endure it, I found out the village to which they had banished her, mounted my horse and started off towards it. I did not reach it before evening of the next day. It appeared that they did not expect my visit, and no order had been given about it in the village. I went straight to the Starosta's, as a neighbor; I entered the yard and looked about me. Matrèna was seated on the steps, with her head on her hand. She was just on the point of crying out when I shook my finger at her and pointed to the door that overlooked the fields at the bottom of the yard. I went into the isba and began to chat with the Starosta; I told him some nonsense or other, and, taking advantage of a favorable opportunity, I went to meet Matrèna. The poor girl hung about my neck. How pale and thin she had become, my dove! I said to her, 'It is nothing, Matrèna; it is nothing; don't cry.' And yet I felt tears coming to my eyes. However, I was ashamed and said to her, 'Matrèna, tears will do no good. Listen to me. You must act, as the saying is, with decision; you must fly with me; that is what you must do.' Matrèna was dismayed. 'How! is it possible? I will be lost! They will destroy me entirely.' 'How foolish you are! how can they find you again?' 'They will discover me; I am sure that they will find me. Thanks, Peter Pétrovitch; I will remember your kindness all my life. But leave me now; it is doubtless my fate.' 'Ah, Matrèna! Matrèna. And I who thought you such a resolute girl!' Indeed she was not

wanting in character; she had a great deal, with a heart of gold! 'Why will you stay here? Come with me; you will be no worse off. Come, confess it: you have felt the weight of the Starosta's fists. Is it not true?' Matrèna blushed and her lips trembled. 'I shall ruin my whole family; they will not leave them in peace.' 'As to your relatives, what can happen to them? Will they exile them?' 'Yes, my brother, they will surely exile them.' 'And your father,—They will not exile him; he is the only good tailor that there is on the place. You know it. And your brother will not die of it.' Well, you may imagine that I had the greatest trouble in the world to persuade her; she began to speak of the disagreeable things to which I was about to expose myself. 'That is not your lookout,' I said to her. I ended in taking her away; but not that day,—another time. One night I came in a *téléga* and took her away with me."

"You carried her off?"

"I carried her off. So then she was installed in my house. My house was not large, and I had but few servants, but I can say that they were all much attached to me; they would not have betrayed me for anything in the world. I was happy. Matrènouchka¹ had recovered her health, and I was seriously attached to her. Ah! she well deserved it. She was really a wonderful girl! She could sing, dance, and play on the guitar. I did not let my neighbors see her; they would have gossiped about it. But I had a friend, Panteleï Gornostafef—you have not the honor of knowing him? He was mad about her; he actually kissed her hands as he would have kissed a lady's. Besides, I must tell you that Gornostafef was a different kind of a man than I: he was very learned; he had read all of Pouchkine. When he began to talk with me and Matrèna, we listened to him in amazement. Did he not take it into his head to teach her to write? He was eccentric, as you see. But what dresses I gave to Matrèna! The Governor's wife had not more beautiful ones. I had a pelisse of rose-colored velvet lined with fur made for her. It was a dressmaker from Moscow, a *madame*, who made it and sewed it after a new fashion,—gathered in at the waist. How queer Matrèna was! She often passed entire hours pensive, with downcast eyes, and never moved. I sat near her, and could not keep my eyes, from her. Then she be-

1. A friendly diminutive of Matrèna.

gan to smile, and my heart jumped with joy as if I had been tickled. At other times she would laugh, dance, play, and embrace me so vigorously that it turned my head. I was continually trying to find some way in which I could please her, only to enjoy her surprise; she was so happy, the poor girl! She blushed with pleasure when adorning herself with my presents, and then kissed me. I don't know how her father, the old Koulik, found her out; he came to see us, and began to weep. Matrèna gave him five roubles and was very kind to him. Nearly five months thus passed, and I would have been contented to live like this to the end of my days; but ill luck came."

Peter Pérovitch paused.

"What happened?" I asked him with interest.

He slowly moved his hand.

"Everything soon went to the devil. I was the cause of her misfortune. I must tell you that Matrènouchka was very fond of sledging, and even drove herself: she put on her pelisse, her embroidered Torjok¹ gloves, took her seat, and urged on the horses with her voice. We went out in the evening, so as not to be recognized. One day it was cold, but the sky was clear, and there was no wind—the weather was so fine! We started off. Matrèna held the reins. 'Where in the devil is she driving us?' I said to myself. 'Can it be to Koukonievka, to her mistress's village?' In faith, yes. 'You are foolish,' I said to her; 'where are you going?' She turned her head towards me and began to laugh. 'Let me amuse myself a little,' she answered. 'Ah, bah!' I thought, 'a little happiness! It must be a pleasure, indeed, to pass before her seigneur's house.' Yes, that must be a pleasure—don't you think so? I let her go. My shaft-horse flew—he seemed to hover in the air; and the flank-horses were bent double. Already there is the village church. But an old green chariot, with a large lackey standing up behind on the tips of his toes, was coming in our direction. The mistress! It is the mistress coming! Fear took possession of me; Matrèna urged on the horses with the end of the reins, and we rushed towards the chariot. The coachman saw us coming, and to avoid these furious beasts he tried to turn, you know. But he turned too short, and the chariot was overturned in a heap of snow. The glass of the door was broken, and the mistress began to groan: 'Al!

1. A town of the government of Tver where they skilfully work skins.

at! at!’ ‘Stop them! stop them!’ cried her companion in a shrill voice. We flew along; it was necessary. All the same, it gave me something to think of. ‘A bad business,’ I said to myself; ‘I was wrong to let her go to Koukonfevka.’

“But would you believe it? The old woman had recognized Matrèna; she had recognized me also, and brought a complaint against me. ‘The noble proprietor Karatfèf,’ she said, ‘is harboring a girl who fled from my house;’ and, of course, she promised the authorities to show herself grateful if they would do her justice. Soon after, I saw the *Ispravnik*¹ coming. I knew him; his name was Stepane Agueïtch Konzovkine. He was a worthy man; though, to tell you the truth, he did not amount to much. So he arrived; he entered my house and said to me, ‘How! Peter Pétrovitch, indeed I don’t understand you! You have got yourself into trouble; the law is precise.’ ‘That’s all right,’ I said to him; ‘we will speak of that another time; but, in the mean while, will you not take something to refresh yourself with after your drive?’

“He consented, but soon resumed: ‘Justice must take its course, Peter Pétrovitch; you will agree to that yourself.’ ‘Yes, doubtless,’ I said, ‘justice is exacting, it is true; justice— But I have heard that you had a little black horse; will you exchange him for my Lampourdass? As to the girl Matrèna, she is not in my possession.’ ‘Tell that to others, Peter Pétrovitch,’ he answered me; ‘you have the girl; it is known: we don’t live *en Suisse*. The trade of which you speak can be made; I could even, if you wish, take your Lampourdass without giving my horse in exchange.’

“At last I ended in getting rid of him this time as well as I could. But the old proprietress bestirred herself more than ever. ‘I am ready,’ she said, ‘to sacrifice ten thousand roubles, if necessary.’ It was all because, you see, she had got the idea into her head that I should marry the young woman in green. I learned this later; that is why she was so furious. God knows what these fine ladies don’t think of! They are so bored! Doubtless that was the reason. Yet I could not extricate myself. Money went fast, and I had hidden Matrèna. But all that was of no use: they pushed me to extremes; they caught me like a hare. I was ruined with debts, and ill. One night I was stretched on

1. Police officer in little villages.

my bed, and was saying to myself, 'My God! why am I so overwhelmed, persecuted? They may do their best; I will not give up this girl! It is stronger than I. I love her! and that's all.' Whom should I see before me? Matrèna. I had concealed her some little time ago on one of my farms, at about two verstes from home.

"I was frightened. 'Have they discovered you yonder? Tell me.' 'No, Peter Pétrovitch,' she answered; 'I have been very quiet at Boubnova; no one has disturbed me. But will that last long? My heart is broken, Peter Pétrovitch,' she added. 'I pity you, my turtle-dove. Never while I live shall I forget your kindness, Peter Pétrovitch, and I have come to take leave of you.' 'What's the matter with you? are you mad? Take leave of me? What do you say?' 'Yes, I am going to give myself up.' 'You are mad! I will shut you up in the garret. You wish to destroy me? you wish to kill me?' The poor girl did not answer; she stood with downcast eyes. 'Come, speak, explain yourself.' 'I don't wish to be a cause of trouble to you any longer, Peter Pétrovitch.' How could I reason with her? 'Imbecile! do you hear what I say? You are a fool! yes, you are—'"

And Peter Pétrovitch began to sob.

"Would you believe it?" he resumed, striking the table with his fist and trying to frown, while large tears ran down his burning cheeks. "She gave herself up; she went and gave herself up!"

"The horses are ready!" solemnly cried the master of the post, who just came into the room.

We arose.

"What did they do with Matrèna?" I asked the young man.

He only answered by a gesture of his hand.

A year after my meeting with Karataief, circumstances took me to Moscow. One day before dinner I went into a café just behind the *okotnoi-riad*,¹ and which, like all the cafés in Moscow, was rather a strange place. The billiard-room was full of smoke, and you could dimly see red faces, mustaches and fantastic top-knots, Hungarian surtouts, and here and there kaftans of the old Russian fashion that had been taken up again a short time before. Several very thin old men, whose appearance was most modest, were

reading the Russian papers. The waiters passed rapidly about with the dishes, and the noise of their steps was deadened by the soft carpets. There were also merchants swallowing their twentieth cup of tea with efforts painful to see. A man whose dress was in disorder, and who tottered a little in his walk, suddenly left the billiard-room. He put his hands in his pockets, bowed his head, and looked mechanically about him.

"Bah! bah! bah! Peter Pétrovitch, how are you?"

I thought he would fall on my neck, but he contented himself with drawing me along with him as he tottered into an adjoining room.

"Sit there," he said to me, establishing himself in an arm-chair; "you will be comfortable. Waiter! beer—no, I mean champagne. In faith, I admit I did not expect to see you again. What a surprise! How long have you been here? and do you intend staying long? God brought you, as the saying is; it is—"

"Yes, you remember me?"

"Why then! I should think so," he hastened to answer. "It is an old story; it is an old story, an old story—"

"What are you doing here, my dear Peter Pétrovitch?"

"I live here, as you can see. Living is good here; there is no lack of companions. I am very content."

He sighed and raised his eyes to the ceiling.

"You are at work?"

"No, not yet; but I think before long I shall have employment. But work is nothing. The men, that is the principal thing. What acquaintances I have made here!"

A young waiter came in with a bottle of champagne on a black dish.

"Here! there is an honest fellow. Are you not, Vacia, an honest fellow? Your health!"

The young man stood still for a few minutes, shook his head with a modest air, smiled, and went away.

"Yes, there are honest men at Moscow," resumed Peter Pétrovitch, "sensible and large-hearted. Do you wish to make their acquaintance? What good comrades! they welcome you with open arms. I will speak to them. But Bobrof is dead. That was a great misfortune!"

"You have not left Moscow? you have not been in your village?"

"My village? My village is sold."

"They have sold it?"

"At auction,—yes. You should have bought it."

"How are you going to make your living, Peter Pétrovitch?"

"Ah! trust in God! I shall not die of hunger. When I have no money—my friends are here. Besides, money—it is vile dust! Gold—it is vile dust!"

He frowned, shoved his hand into his pocket, drew out two pieces of silver, one of fifteen, the other of ten kopeks, and putting them into the palm of his hand, he stretched them out to me.

"What is this? Is it not vile dust?" The two pieces of silver rolled on the floor. "Tell me rather whether you have read Polajaïef."¹

"Yes."

"Have you seen Matchalof² in *Hamlet*?"

"No, never."

"You have not seen him? you have not seen him?" He grew pale, and rolled his eyes with a restless air; he turned, and his lips twitched. "Ah, Matchalof! Matchalof! 'To die: to sleep,'" he said in a deep voice.

"Who is this Bobrof?"

"Serge Bobrof. He was an excellent man, and had taken me under his protection,—me, an ignoramus, an inhabitant of the Steppe. And Panteleï Gornostaïef also, he is dead. All are dead, all!

" 'To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. . . .'

"To sleep! to sleep!" he muttered several times.

"Please tell me—"

But he did not let me finish, and again began with fire:

" 'For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? . . .
Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.'"

1. A Russian poet whose works are strange, and who leads a restless life.
2. A celebrated Russian actor.

He let his head fall on the table and began to utter confused exclamations intermixed with sighs.

“‘Within a month,’” he resumed with a new pose :

“‘ . . . Within a month, . . .
A little month, or ere those shoes were old,
With which she followed my poor father’s body, . . .
O heaven! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourned longer! . . .’”

He took a glass of champagne and carried it to his lips ; but he did not touch it, and again began to declaim :

“‘ What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? . . .
. . . Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard and blows it into my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i’ the throat,
As deep as to the lungs? . . .
But I am pigeon-livered, and lack gall
To make oppression bitter. . . .’”

Karataïef let his glass fall and took his head in both his hands. I had understood him. Like Hamlet he was doubtless reproaching himself for having cowardly abandoned the poor girl who had sacrificed herself for him.

“Ah! bah!” he said to me at length, “he who recalls the past puts his finger in his eye. Is it not true?” He began to laugh. “Your health!”

“You intend to stay at Moscow?” I asked him.

“I shall die at Moscow.”

“Karataïef!” some one cried in the next room. “Karataïef! where are you? Come here, amiable mortal!”

“They call me,” he said to me, rising with an effort. “Come and see me, if you have the time; I live—”

But the next day unforeseen circumstances obliged me to go away. I have never heard Peter Pétrovitch Karataïef spoken of since.

CHAPTER IX.

LÉBÉDIANA.

ONE of the great advantages of shooting, my dear reader, is the perpetual going from place to place by those persons who indulge in it, and for idlers there is nothing more agreeable. It is true that at times (especially in rainy weather) these ramblings through the fields are not so pleasant. It is necessary to stop every peasant whom you meet and ask him the way. "Halloo! friend," you cry out, "in what direction must I go to reach Mordovka?" On coming to the village for which you are looking, a new trouble awaits you. There you must undergo a long harangue with a stupid peasant-woman (all the workmen are in the fields) in order to find out how far you are from the nearest inn, and which road you must take to get there. You start off again, but after going a dozen verstes you find, instead of an inn, the wretched village Khoudoubouf, the muddy street of which is full of pigs that wallow in it with delight and seem vexed at being disturbed in their occupation. Many other disagreeable things await you; you are often obliged to cross over bridges that totter under your feet, to go down into ravines, to wade across brooks surrounded by swamps. Nothing is less amusing, I must say, than walking for entire days in the sea of verdure that covers the highways, and I trust to God that you will never be condemned to stay for several hours stuck in the mud before a party-colored post¹ with the figures 22 on one side and 23 on the other. Finally, it is anything but agreeable to have for your entire diet, for weeks at a time, nothing but eggs, milk, and black bread; but all these discomforts are made up for by a number of advantages and pleasures of which I will not speak to-day, for it is time for me to begin my story.

What I have just told you explains sufficiently how I

1. Posts that mark the distance from one relay to another.

happened to find myself, a dozen years ago, in the very midst of the horse-fair at Lébédiána. It may very often happen to us sportsmen, on going out in the morning from our more or less patrimonial roof, with the fixed intention to return by evening, to wander little by little, while after snipe, as far as the happy banks of the Petchora. Besides, love of dogs and guns necessarily involves that of the noblest of animals—the horse. Well, I came to Lébédiána, went to an inn, changed my clothes, and directed my steps to the place where they were holding the fair. The waiter at the inn, a tall, thin youth of twenty, had already found time to confide in me, in a high nasal voice, that his Excellency Prince N., who bought horses for the cavalry, was staying under the same roof with me; that many other seigneurs had also arrived; that the Bohemians sang every evening; that they were giving “*Pane Tverdovski*”¹ at the theatre; that the horses sold well and were a good lot.

Several rows of carts, apparently without end, covered the place where the fair was being held. Behind these carts were horses of every description: trotters, horses for breeding purposes, draught-horses, post-horses, and peasants' horses. Some fat and sleek, arranged according to their color, covered with motley-colored cloths, were tied up very short to high racks; they gazed timidly at the whips that their masters the horse-dealers held, the range and weight of which they knew only too well; proprietors' horses, sent by these seigneurs who lived in the Steppes, at a hundred or even two hundred verstes from Lébédiána, under the care of some decrepit old coachmen and two or three obstinate grooms, were bending their graceful necks, pawing the ground and gnawing the fences; roan horses from Wiatka pressed against each other; trotters with large hind-quarters, long sweeping tails, and hairy legs stood like lions, perfectly still; there were some of every color, black, bay, and dappled gray; lovers of horse-flesh stopped before them in admiration. In the midst of the streets that the *télégas* made moved men of every age and of every condition: horse-dealers in blue kaftans and high caps were looking askance at the public and seeking a buyer; Bohemians with curly heads and prominent eyes ran from one place to another like scalded cats, examined the horses' teeth, lifted up their feet or their tails, shouted, uttered big words, offered

1. The “*Faust*” of the Poles.

their services, meddled in the sales, cast lots among themselves, and hovered about those who were buying for the cavalry, who were betrayed by their military caps and their cloaks with the beaver collar. A stout Kosak, perched on a thin horse with the neck of a stag, was offering his steed for sale as it stood—that is, with saddle and bridle. Peasants dressed in touloupes open under the arms, resolutely pushing their way through the crowd, crammed by dozens into a téléga to which was harnessed a horse that they proposed to try; or, collected together on one side, they discussed some bargain among themselves, a cunning Bohemian looking on, talked themselves hoarse, shook each other by the hand more than a hundred times, as a proof of assent, without, however, yielding a jot of their claims; while the object of all these debates, a miserable steed covered with an old mat, stood by quietly, blinking, just as if his fate were not being debated. Indeed this indifference was very natural; it must have been of very little importance to the poor beast to know which one of them was to beat him. Seigneurs with retreating foreheads and waxed mustaches walked about with a grave air, wearing square hats and camlet tunics, through the sleeves of which they had passed but one arm, and chatted in an affable way with fat merchants who wore fur caps and green gloves. Great numbers of the officers belonging to different branches of the service thronged about the crowd; an enormous cuirassier of German birth was coldly asking a lame horse-dealer "how much he wished for that sorrel horse there." A huzzar, with light complexion and about twenty years of age, wished a leader as a match for a used-up, ambling wheeler. An famchtik with a low hat encircled by a peacock's feather, dressed in a reddish armiak, and whose long leather gloves were passed through a kind of leather belt, was looking on all sides for a good shaft-horse. The coachmen were braiding the tails and wetting the manes of their horses, and were respectfully giving advice to the seigneurs; those who had struck a bargain hastened to an inn or a tavern according to the state of their purse. Such was the sight the fair presented; and this busy crowd vociferated, disputed and made up again, abused each other and shouted with laughter, in the midst of a thick mud into which they sank up to their knees.

I wished to buy a team of three strong horses for my britchka; mine were beginning to be unfit for use. I soon

found two that suited me; but it was impossible to discover a third to my taste. I turned back to the inn for dinner. (I will not describe this meal; it is always painful to recall a sorrowful past: this has indeed been recognized since the time of Æneas.) I got up from the table and went to a place that they called a café, and where assembled, every evening, buyers of horses for the cavalry, proprietors of studs, and other persons. The billiard-room was dense with smoke; twenty people were assembled there. There were young proprietors with free and easy manners, in Hungarian surtouts and gray trousers, their hair curled and their little mustaches carefully waxed, and with a proud, bold look. Among them were other seigneurs in loose coats; most of them had their heads buried between their shoulders, their faces swollen with fat, and were puffing in a desperate manner. Merchants stood modestly apart; officers chatted freely among themselves. Two players were at the table; one of them, Prince N., was a young man with an open, somewhat scornful countenance; his long frock-coat unbuttoned exposed to sight a red silk shirt and large velvet trousers. An ex-lieutenant was playing with him; his name was Klopakof, and he deserves a more detailed description.

Lieutenant Victor Klopakof was a thin little man with a dark complexion, who might have been thirty; his hair was black, his eyes brown, and his nose large and turned up. He spent most of his time at assemblies of the nobility and at horse-fairs. He skipped in walking, moving his arms in a swaggering way, his cap over his ear, and he generally rolled up the sleeves of his military great-coat, which were lined with shot-colored calico. Klopakof had a talent for insinuating himself into the good graces of all the rich wild Pétropolitano whom he met; he smoked, drank, played cards with them, and was allowed to *tutoyer* them. By what right did he enjoy these favors? That would be rather difficult to say. Lieutenant Klopakof was not clever; he was not even amusing, and could not in any way fill the office of buffoon. He was treated, it is true, a little cavalierly, as an honest fellow of no importance. This lasted for two or three weeks, and then they stopped bowing to him and he did likewise. The only merit that can be given the Lieutenant was that of repeating on every occasion, and as often as he could with reference to nothing at all, for a year or two, one and the same expression, which had nothing amusing about it, but which no one could hear without bursting out laugh-

ing. Eight years ago he said constantly, "My *respectés*, I thank you very humbly;" and all those who patronized him began to laugh, or even begged him to say it again. Then he adopted rather a complicated phrase: "Non, vous allez déjà, *qu'est qui c'est ça, qui sont de sortir.*" And this new foolishness obtained just as great a success. Two years after this he had taken up the habit of saying, "Don't be angry, man of God sewn in a sheep-skin." Nothing more foolish; is it not so? And yet he owed to these not very ingenious inventions shelter, food, and clothing. He had dissipated his fortune long since, and now he lived on his friends. I repeat it, you could not find another merit in him unless, however, it be in smoking a hundred times a day, in lifting the right leg as high as his head when he took aim at billiards, and using his cue with great skill—practices that are not, after all, to the taste of every one. I must add, however, that he drank straight; but this talent is not rare in our good Russia. Finally, the favor that he enjoyed with certain people was for me a mystery, unless you attribute it to his extreme prudence: he could keep the secrets of the hosts who entertained him, and the slightest slander never passed his lips.

"Let us see," I said to myself on seeing Klopakof, "what his favorite phrase is to-day."

The Prince hit the white.

"Thirty to nothing," said a consumptive, melancholy-looking marker with heavy eyes.

The Prince vigorously knocked the yellow into the corner pocket.

"Ah! ah!" joyously cried out a stout merchant who was seated in a corner of the room before a little rickety table; but he had no sooner uttered this exclamation when he became confused. Very fortunately no one had taken any notice of it. He sighed and began to stroke his beard.

"Thirty-six to nothing," cried the marker in a nasal tone.

"What do you say to that, brother?" asked the Prince of Klopakof.

"Well, what of it? It was a rrrakalioon, a real rrrakalioon."

The Prince gave a burst of laughter.

"How, how? Repeat it!"

"Rrrakalioon!" repeated the Lieutenant with a satisfied air.

"That's the word," I said to myself.

The Prince hit the red.

"Ah! that is not the way," timidly said a light-haired young officer with red tired eyes, a very small nose, and the appearance of a child just awakened from a sound sleep. "You understand; you should not play it like that."

"Indeed!" said the Prince without disturbing himself.

"You should do it so—by a triple."

"Indeed!" replied the Prince between his teeth.

"It is this evening, Prince," the young man hastened to add, quite confused, "that we are going to the Bohemians? Stechka will sing; Ilioucha—"

The Prince did not answer.

"Rrrakalioon! brother," said Klopakof, winking his left eye maliciously.

The Prince began to laugh.

"Thirty-nine to nothing," cried the marker majestically.

"Nothing, nothing. You are going to see how that yellow one there—"

Klopakof moved his cue rapidly, leaned his left hand on the billiard-table, took a long aim—and missed.

"Ah! rrrakaliooon!" he cried in his rage.

The Prince began to laugh more than ever.

"How, how, how?"

But Klopakof was not disposed to say it again. It is good sometimes to be urged.

"You have had the honor of missing," said the marker. "Allow me to chalk your cue. Forty to nothing."

"By the way, gentlemen," replied the Prince, turning to the lookers-on, but without looking at any one in particular, "you know we must remember the Verjembitskafa this evening after the play?"

"How's that? Yes, of course!" cried several of the audience, hastening to answer the Prince's observation. "The Verjembitskafa."

"The Verjembitskafa is an excellent actress; much better than the Sopniakovna," added in a harsh voice a wretched-looking little man wearing mustaches and spectacles. The unhappy man! he was secretly burning for the Sopniakovna; and the Prince did not deign to give him a look.

"Here, waiter, a pipe!" cried a tall thin person in a voice that seemed to issue out of his collar; he had regular features and an appearance of exaggerated dignity, which, in Russia, denotes almost always a skilful player.

The servant ran to look for a pipe, and was not long in

reappearing; he announced to his Excellency that the famchtik Baklage wished to speak to him.

"Well, tell him to wait; and bring me a glass of brandy."

"Very well; you shall be obeyed."

I then learned that Baklage was a handsome young fellow whose habits were not of the very best. The Prince liked him, and gave him horses, went on expeditions with him, and they often passed entire nights together. But to-day one would no longer recognize the Prince, the worthless scamp of old. He is now a man neat as a pin, a proud, important person. How well he fulfils the duties of his position! and above all, how grave and sensible he has become!

The tobacco-smoke began to make my eyes ache. I listened for the last time to Klopakof's exclamation, the Prince's burst of laughter, and went back to the inn, where my servant had made up a bed on a narrow sofa stuffed with hair and out of shape from much use.

The next day I resolved to go and see the horses that the horse-dealers kept at the stable, and began my rounds with one of the most renowned among them, a certain Citnikof. Going through a kalitka, I entered a carefully gravelled yard. The horse-dealer stood before the stable-door, which was wide open. He was a middle-aged man, tall and robust, and wore a hare-skin touloupe the collar of which was close to his neck. As soon as he saw me he came forward, took his cap in both hands, and raising it above his head, said in a drawling voice,

"Ah! my humble respects. You have doubtless condescended to come and see my little horses."

"Yes, I came to see your horses."

"What kind of horses, allow me to ask you?"

"Show me what you have."

"With great pleasure."

We went into the stable. Several big white-haired dogs left the hay upon which they were lying and came up to us, wagging their tails; an old goat with a long beard came out of the back of the stable with a discontented air; three grooms, dressed in touloupes in good condition but very dirty, saluted us silently. Horses were on both sides of the stable, in stalls put up for the occasion; there were thirty of them, all groomed and kept with the greatest care. Pigeons were flying about, cooing on the rafters.

"You wish—I mean for what use do you wish a horse? A horse to drive or to work?" asked Citnikof.

"Show me both kinds."

"Very well; we understand, we understand," answered the horse-dealer, slowly striking an attitude. "Petka, show Hermine to the gentleman."

We left the stable.

"But wouldn't you like to have them bring you a bench from the isba?"

"As you wish."

A horse's step re-echoed on the boards, a cracking was heard, and Petka, a man of forty, with a swarthy face and marked with the small-pox, came out of the stable with a rather fine-looking stallion. After letting him prance as much as he liked, he trotted him two or three times before us in the yard, and skilfully brought him up to the place that was well adapted to showing the horses off. Hermine stretched out his neck, snorted, raised his tail, moved his head, and began to glance sideways at us.

"He is a very well-trained beast," I said, examining him.

"Let him go, let him go," said Citnikof to the groom, and he looked at me.

"How do you like him?" he asked me at last.

"He is not bad; a good enough animal; a little tender, perhaps, forward."

"His legs are perfectly sound," Citnikof answered me, with an accent of conviction; "and what hind-quarters! Please look at them—a real stove;¹ you might sleep on them."

"His pasterns are too long."

"Too long? Come, now. Start him a little, Petka; start him, but trot, trot; don't gallop him."

The groom again started off with Hermine. There was a moment's silence.

"Come! take him away," said Citnikof. "Show the Falcon."

A few moments after, Falcon, a stallion of Holland breed, black as jet, with round hind-quarters, but a little lank, appeared in the yard. He was not much better than Hermine. He was one of those animals that have a habit of throwing their feet out on one side as they go along, without making

1. Russian peasants generally lie on the top of their stoves. (See note on page 13.)

much headway. Middle-aged merchants like horses of this kind; their gait has a certain affected grace that attracts them; they are wonderfully adapted for an after-dinner drive. Harnessed to a comfortable drochki and driven by a sleek-looking coachman, they go along majestically, with their necks curved like swans, pompously drawing a heavy merchant suffering from gastritis, and his fat wife with a lilac handkerchief about her head, and wrapped up in an ample coat of blue silk.

I told Citnikof that Falcon did not please me any better than Hermine. Several other horses were shown me, and among the number a dapple-gray stallion, who seemed to me to be an excellent animal. I did not hide this opinion, and going up to the horse, I began to pat him. The horse-dealer immediately assumed an air of indifference.

"Is he good for a team?" I asked him.

"Oh yes," he replied calmly.

"Could you not try him?"

"Why not? willingly. Hey! Konzia, hitch up Swift to the drochki."

Konzia, a master-coachman worthy of the delicate duties entrusted to him, passed two or three times before us in the street. Swift behaved very well. He had an easy gait, a long stride, his tail was well put on, and he did not move his hind-quarters as he went along.

"How much do you wish for him?"

Citnikof asked me a fabulous price. We began to bargain in the middle of the street; but suddenly a handsome téléga, drawn by three fine lamchtik horses, came noisily out of the next street, and stopped abruptly before the door of the house. It was Prince N. who thus arrived, with his friend Klopakof. Baklaga drove, and how well he did it! He could have passed through an ear-ring, the scamp! The two flank-horses were lively little beasts, with black feet and noses; they were high-spirited, restless animals; at the slightest whistle off they would go like a shot. The shaft-horse stood firmly on his legs, his chest out, eyes half-shut, neck gracefully curved, and his legs as slender as arrows. What a team! A Tzar could not have wished for anything better with which to show himself in public on Easter Day.

"Your Excellency, will you come in?" cried Citnikof.

The Prince jumped out. Klopakof got out slowly on the other side.

"Good-day, brother. Have you any horses?"

"Why should I not have them for your Excellency! Come in, I beg of you. Petka, bring out Peacock, and let them get The Well-beloved ready. As to our business," he added, turning to me, "we will finish that another time. Fomka, a bench for his Excellency."

I soon saw Peacock appear. They brought him out from a separate stable that I had not noticed. He was a superb animal, and he sprang into the yard with such rapidity that his feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground. Citnikof turned away his head and half-closed his eyes.

"No! rrakalion!" cried Klopakof, "*j'ême ça.*"

The Prince began to laugh.

They had a great deal of trouble to restrain Peacock; he dragged the groom who was holding him about the yard for some time. They finally stopped him near a wall. He snorted, trembled, turned round and round at every moment; still Citnikof did not stop exciting him with his whip.

"What do you mean? I will! bah!" he said to him in a tone of reproach mixed with tenderness; for he himself could not help admiring him.

"How much?" asked the Prince.

"For your Excellency, five thousand."

"Three."

"Impossible! Your Excellency, what are you thinking of?"

"Three was said; rrakalion!" said Klopakof.

I went away without waiting for the end of the trade. In passing the house that was at the corner of the street, I noticed above a door a large sheet of paper. At the top of this placard was drawn with a pen a horse with a tail like a trumpet and a neck without end. Under this vignette were traced in old Russian characters the following words:

"Here are sold horses of every color, brought to the fair of Lébédiána from the well-known studs of Anastacef Ivanovitch Tchernobaï, a proprietor of the Government of Iambof. These horses are picked, very well groomed, and naturally kind. Customers will please ask for Anastacef Ivanovitch himself; and if by chance Anastacef be absent, address the coachman Nazar Koubychkine. Buyers, we beg of you, please honor with your visit an old man!"

I stopped. "I have a great mind to go in and see these horses of Tchernobaï, the proprietor of this well-known stud," I said to myself.

I put my hand on the latch of the door; but, contrary to the custom of the country, it was locked. I knocked.

"Who's there? A customer?" cried a woman's voice.

"Yes, a customer."

"There, father, there."

The door opened. I found myself face to face with an old peasant-woman of about fifty. She was bareheaded, wore boots, and her touloupe was open.

"Will you please come in, foster-father? and I will go and tell Anastacef Ivanovitch. Nazar! Hey! Nazar!"

"What is it?" answered a cracked voice from the stable.

"Get the little horses ready. Here is a customer."

The old woman ran into the house.

"A customer! a customer!" answered Nazar in a surly tone; "I have not done washing their tails."

"O Arcadia!" I reflected on these details.

"Good-day, father; will you please come in?" was slowly said behind me in a full pleasant voice. I turned and saw an old man in a long blue coat. His hair was white, and he had fine blue eyes and a very sweet smile.

"Do you want a horse? All right, father, all right. But will you not come in and drink a cup of tea?"

I refused this invitation and thanked him.

"As you like. Pardon me, father, I am of the old school." (Tchernobaf spoke slowly and sounded the *o*.) "I am a plain man, you know. Nazar! Hey! Nazar!" he added slowly and without raising his voice.

Nazar, a surly-looking, little old man, with a thin nose and pointed beard, appeared on the threshold.

"What kind of a horse would you like, father?" Tchernobaf asked me.

"Horses well broken for the britchka, and at a moderate price."

"Very well, we have them; very well. Nazar, Nazar, show the little Hungarian horse to the master—the gray, you know, the one in the corner; and then the bay with a star on his forehead; or else the one that has just come from Gracieuse; the other, do you understand?"

We went to the stable.

"Lead them out with their halters," Tchernobaf cried to him. "With me," he continued; looking at me with a frank, quiet gaze, "it is not as with horse-dealers, Heaven forgive them! They have all sorts of preparations—salt, brandy,

1. The manner of speaking to be met with among priests, merchants, and generally with persons of the old school.

drugs, and pepper. God bless them! Everything is as clear and open as the palm of your hand with me, without any tricks at all."

The horses were brought out. They did not please me.

"Come, take them away, with the grace of God," Anastacef Ivanovitch said. "Show us others."

Others were brought out. I finally chose one. We began to discuss the price. Tchernobaï was not excited; he spoke so reasonably, and with so much gravity, that one truly felt obliged *to honor* in him the old man, according to the sign. I finally gave him something on account.

"Now," resumed Anastacef Ivanovitch, "allow me to make over the horse to you according to the old custom. It is an animal for which you will be grateful to me; he is as sound as the nut on the tree! Finally, a true horse of the Steppe. He is fitted for driving and riding."

Having said this, he crossed himself, stretched one of the skirts of his coat on his hand, seized the end of the halter and passed it to me.

"Now possess it in peace with the grace of God. And will you not accept a little cup of tea now?"

"No, I thank you; I must return."

"As you like. And shall my little coachman follow you with the little horse?"

"Oh yes; if you like."

"Certainly, my turtle-dove, certainly. Vassili! Hey! Vassili! go with the master; take the little horse and receive the money. So good-by, father; may Heaven protect you!"

"Good-by, Anastacef Ivanovitch."

They took the horse to the inn. The next day I discovered that he was lame and broken-winded. I had him hitched up; it was impossible to make him start; at the slightest blow of the whip he began to balk, and ended by lying down.

I immediately went back to Tchernobaï's, and on coming to his door I asked whether he was at home.

"Yes."

"Well," I said to him, "you have sold me a broken-winded horse."

"Broken-winded? God help me!"

"And besides, he is lame and vicious."

"Lame? I knew nothing of that; your little coachman must have hurt him. As to me, I can swear before God—"

"At least, Anastace! Ivanovitch, you should take him back."

"No, father; don't be angry. Once out of the yard, all is at an end. You should have examined him carefully."

I understood him, and, submitting to my fate, began to laugh and went away. Happily the lesson did not cost me too dear.

A few days after I departed. At the end of a week I passed through Lébédiana on my way home. I found in the café nearly all the faces that I had seen there the first time, and among others the Prince playing billiards. But Klopakof's lot had experienced one of those changes to which he was so accustomed. The little, light-haired officer of huzars had replaced him with the Prince. The poor Lieutenant attempted, in my presence, to slip a word into the conversation to try to get back his old favor: not only did the Prince not smile, but frowned and shrugged his shoulders. Klopakof bowed his head, and went and squatted in a corner of the room. Soon after I saw him silently filling a pipe.

CHAPTER X.

TCHERTAPKANOF AND NÉDOPOUSKINE.

ONE day I was returning from shooting in my *téléga*; it was in the middle of summer and very warm. Jermolai, who was seated near me, was dozing, his head falling forward every moment without its waking him. The dogs sleeping at our feet were tossed about as if dead by the joltings of the *téléga*. The coachman was continually switching with his whip at the flies that lit on the horses. A cloud of whitish dust followed the *téléga*. We entered a grove; the road became worse, the wheels were continually being caught in the branches. Jermolai woke up with a start, and looked about him. "Ah," he cried, "there must be grouse about here! Let us find out." We got out and went into the bushes. My dog soon sprung a covey of grouse; I fired, and was about to reload my gun, when, the bushes suddenly opening with a noise behind me, I saw a cavalier who came toward me. "Allow me to ask you, my dear sir," he said haughtily, "by what right you are shooting over these lands?" The person who thus questioned me spoke through his nose and jerked out his words very quickly. I looked at him fixedly. I never in my life met such a figure. Imagine, my dear readers, a little, light-haired man with long red mustaches and a red, turned-up nose. A long Persian head-dress, topped by a violet cloth cap, covered his forehead to his eyebrows. His dress consisted of a yellow threadbare *arkalouk*,¹ with black plush pockets on the breast, and silver lace on all the seams; this last showed long usage, as did all the rest of his dress. He wore a hunting-horn hung by a lace cord passing under his shoulder, and a dagger stuck out of his belt. The bay horse that he rode was foundered, broken-winded, and stumbled at every step; two setters, thin and ill-shapen, ran about this steed. The features, look, voice, and all his movements,

1. Persian dress in the form of a tunic.

—in a word, the whole appearance of this singular person showed a sort of swaggering audacity and excessive pride; his light blue, glassy eyes wandered about like a drunken man's; he threw his head back, puffed out his cheeks, expanded his nostrils, and moved about so as to give himself more importance. All these attractions reminded one very faithfully of a turkey-cock. He repeated the question that he had addressed to me on coming up.

"I did not know that it was forbidden to shoot in these woods," I answered.

"You are here on my land, my dear sir."

"Since you wish it," I said to him, "I will retire."

"Permit me," he replied; "have I the honor of speaking to a noble?"

I stated my name.

"In that case, please continue your shooting. I am noble myself, and esteem myself very happy to render a service to a noble. My name is Panteleï Tcher-tap-ka-nof."

Panteleï Tcher-tap-ka-nof bowed, urged on his animal with his voice and dealt him a blow with the *najaïka*¹ between the ears; the horse shook his head, reared, jumped on one side, and crushed the foot of one of the dogs. The cries of the poor animal made Tchertapkanof furious; he foamed with rage, and struck his horse several times with his fist; then, jumping to the ground with the rapidity of lightning, he began to examine the dog's foot, spat on the wound, pushed the dog with his foot to stop his cries, seized his horse's mane, and put his foot in the stirrup. The horse stretched out his neck, raised his head, and jumped into the bushes; Tchertapkanof followed him hobbling along with one foot in the stirrup, and finally ended by getting astride of him. When he was in the saddle he waved his *najaïka* frantically, and galloped off winding his horn. He was scarcely out of sight, when a middle-aged man mounted on a little black horse suddenly came noiselessly out of the bushes. He stopped, took off the green leather cap that he wore, and asked me in a weak, sweet voice if I had not met a cavalier on a bay horse. I answered that he had just gone away.

"And which way was he pleased to go?" he added in the same tone, and without putting on his cap.

"In that direction."

1. A thick, short whip used by the Cossacks.

"I thank you very humbly."

He clacked with his lips, kicked his horse's flanks several times with his heel, and trotted off in the direction that I had pointed out. I followed him with my eyes until his pointed cap had disappeared in the midst of the branches. The second person was in no way like the person who had so abruptly questioned me. He had a large, bloated face that expressed kindness, timidity, and resignation; his nose, large and round, was covered with little bluish veins, and denoted a sensual temperament. The front of his head was entirely without hair, but several little reddish locks hung on his neck; his little blinking eyes were like gimlet-holes, and a sweet smile lighted up his thick red lips. He wore a very neat but threadbare surtout, with a straight collar and copper buttons. His cloth trousers were rolled up to his knees, and showed his little round calves and the yellow legs of his boots.

"Who is he?" I asked Jermolaf when we had lost sight of him.

"That," he answered, "that is Tikone Ivanovitch Né-dopouskine. He lives with Tchertapkanof."

"Is he a poor man?"

"He is not rich; but Tchertapkanof is as poor as he: he is not worth a sou."

"Why does he live with him, then?"

"Out of friendship. They cannot live without each other. It is as I say. They are inseparable, though they are not at all alike. But where the horse passes with his shoe, the crab goes with his claws."

We left the brushwood. The barking of two setters suddenly sounded at a few steps from us, and a large hare rushed out into the oats, that were already quite high. He was immediately followed by setters and greyhounds; their master, Tchertapkanof, was not long in emerging in his turn from the bushes. He tried in vain to urge on the pack; he was out of breath, puffing, and only from time to time uttered a few inarticulate sounds with great effort; his eyes had a haggard look, and he was urging on his unfortunate steed by the blows of his *najaika*. The hounds were gaining on the hare, that kept close to the ground, doubled abruptly on itself, started off afresh and went towards the copse on Jermolaf's side. The hounds passed beyond him. "Attention! fire!" cried Tchertapkanof with an effort, as though he had lost the use of his tongue: he was beside

himself. "My dear, attention!" Jermolai fired. The hare, wounded, rolled over like a ball on the dry smooth grass that covered the edge of the wood, made one more bound, and uttered a plaintive cry: one of the dogs had just seized him between his jaws. A few minutes after he was joined by the rest of the pack.

The fearless Tchertapkanof jumped down from his horse, drew his dagger, ran heavily towards the dogs, took from them the hare that they were tearing in pieces, loading them with abuse, plunged the blade of his dagger into its throat, and, burying it up to the hilt with a frightful grimace, uttered the usual cry as a sign of victory. Tikone Ivanovitch at that moment came out of the bushes. "Ho! ho! ho! ho!" again cried Tchertapkanof.

"Ho! ho! ho! ho!" repeated his friend tranquilly.

"You really ought not to give yourself the pleasure of hunting at this season," I said to Tchertapkanof, pointing out to him the field of oats.

"That field belongs to me," he answered in a breathless voice.

He cut off the hare's feet, and, throwing them to the dogs, strung the hare to his saddle.

"I owe the shot to you, my friend, according to hunting laws," he said to Jermolai. "As to you, dear sir," he added in a dry tone and jerking out his words as usual, "I thank you."

He remounted his horse.

"Per—mit me to ask you—I have forgotten—your name—" I repeated it to him.

"I am happy to make your acquaintance. Whenever you have a chance, give me the pleasure of coming to see me. But where, then, is our Fomka, Tikone Ivanovitch?" he added impatiently; "the hare was taken without him."

"His horse fell and is dying," replied Tikone Ivanovitch, smiling.

"How so! Orbaçame dead? Pfou! pfit! Where is he?" "Yonder, behind the woods."

Tchertapkanof applied a blow of his nagalka to his horse's snout, and started off at full speed. Tikone Ivanovitch saluted me twice, on his own account and for his friend, and was off, at his usual little trot, into the bushes.

These two eccentric persons had strongly aroused my curiosity. How could two beings so dissimilar be united by the bonds of a close friendship? I put myself in quest of information, and here is the result of my researches.

Panteleï Érémeitch Tchertapkanof passed in the country for a dangerous and strange man, with unbearable pride, and, in addition to that, a bully of the worst kind. He had served for a short time in the army; certain disagreeable circumstances had obliged him to leave the service with the rank that has given rise to a well-known saying.¹ He belonged to an old family that formerly had possessed a large property; his ancestors lived magnificently after the manner of rich seigneurs of the Steppe; they welcomed indiscriminately all the guests who came and knocked at their door; their table was overflowing; even the visitors' horses were fed with a prodigality that did honor to the master of the house. The household of these hospitable proprietors was numerous: there were musicians, singers, huntsmen with their packs; and on fête-days this crowd of menials was provided with brandy and beer. In the winter the possessors of these estates went to Moscow with their own horses, in heavy chariots; but they were often, at times entire months, without a shilling in their purse; they then lived upon the provisions that they had brought from their own estates. Panteleï Érémeitch's father had inherited an estate already ruined, but he led such a merry life that when he died he left to his son only the little village of Bezsonovo, the population of which consisted of thirty-five men and sixty-six women, all pledged to the crown,² fourteen déciatines and an eighth of bad estates in the moors of Kolobradova, a territory of which he could not prove the possession by any title. The deceased was ruined in a strange manner; he owed it to the way in which he understood domestic economy. Thinking it unworthy of a gentleman to do business with merchants, bourgeois, and other *brigands* as he called them, he had trained his people to a number of occupations that they practised on his account. "It is much cheaper, and I find it more convenient," he said; "it is a good contrivance for domestic economy." So he persisted in this unfortunate system to the end of his life, and it led to his ruin. But he had the satisfaction of realizing all his whims, and strange enough they

1. A Russian proverb says: "The hen is not a bird; woman is not a human being; a sub lieutenant is not an officer."

2. The Russian seigneurs resort, when they are in want of funds, to an establishment of credit called Lombard, which takes mortgages on their estates. These properties are sold at auction if the borrower does not fulfil his obligations. This establishment, which arose in the last century, was authorized by the government.

were. For example, he took it into his head to have made, after a drawing of his own, a family carriage so large that when all the horses of the village and their owners, who were summoned for that purpose, started it, it turned over at the first winding hill, and fell to pieces. Eremai Loukitch (so he was named) had a monument raised at that place, and seemed in no way affected by the accident. He also undertook to build a church without an architect's assistance. The baking of the bricks eat up a whole wood; he had foundations made that would have held up a cathedral; the walls were raised and a cupola begun: but it fell. This misfortune did not discourage him; the work went on, harder than ever: the cupola again fell. It was again begun for the third time, and the same accident was repeated. Eremai began to reflect. "The work does not advance," he said; "a spell must have been thrown over it." And he forthwith had all the old peasant-women of the village whipped. But the building of the cupola was not made easier, and he was obliged to give it up. Soon after he resolved to build over all the houses of his villages on a uniform plan, still for reasons of agricultural economy. He united them three and three in the form of a triangle, and had raised in the middle of each of these groups of houses a large painted pole, with a flag and a house for starlings. Every day saw the development of new inventions not less ingenious: now he had prepared a burr soup; now he ordered his horses' tails to be cut and to be made into caps for his dvorovi; now he attempted to replace flax by nettles, and to feed pigs on mushrooms. Having read one day in the *Journal de Moscou* an article in which a proprietor of the Government of Kharkof spoke of the benefit of good morals among the peasantry, he ordered the next day all the inhabitants of the village to learn the piece by heart. He was obeyed; he asked the peasants whether they understood this little lesson. The steward hastened to answer that they understood it wonderfully well. Finally he took a new whim into his head. In order to keep a better watch, and maintain order on his estates, he numbered all his serfs, and obliged each of them to inscribe his number on the collar of his tunic. When they met their master, they were all to announce in a low voice the number that they bore; he answered them affably, "Pass on your way with the grace of God."

In spite of all these wise measures, Eremai Loukitch soon

found himself in a very embarrassing position. To free himself from it he began to pledge his estates to the crown; soon after he was obliged to put them up for sale. The last of his villages, that in which he had built the church without the cupola, and which had been the residence of his ancestors, was put up at auction by the government; but Eremei Loukitch had just died as this sale took place, otherwise it would certainly have led to his death. He had the satisfaction of ending his days in his own house, in his own bed, surrounded by his servants and under the eyes of his physicians; but the unfortunate Pantelei received for his heritage only the hamlet of Bezsonovo.

When he learned of his father's illness, he was with his regiment, and was trying to get out of some disagreeable affairs of which I have spoken above. He was in his nineteenth year, and his childhood was passed under the paternal roof; his mother, Vaciliça Vacilievna, a woman of rare goodness, but very narrow-minded, had indulged him in all his whims, and this weakness had had the result that one might have expected: he had become a regular scamp. Eremei Loukitch had not troubled himself about his son's education; the care of his estates took up all his time. Once only he had severely corrected Pantelei with his own hands because he had mispronounced one of the letters of the alphabet. But to tell the truth, that day one of his best greyhounds had been killed by running against the trunk of a tree while coursing, and this circumstance had put him in a bad humor. Moreover, the education that Vaciliça Vacilievna gave to her son did not require a great effort of mind; she had dug up an old Alsatian pensioner, named Birkopf, and to her last hour she trembled like a leaf on thinking of the embarrassment she would find herself in if this mentor should leave them. Nothing more natural. "I had so much trouble," she said to herself, "in persuading this worthy instructor to leave the family in which he was engaged! How could I replace him? I should be ruined." This uneasiness had not escaped Birkopf's penetration, and like a clever man he turned his position to account; he drank like a fish, and slept from morning till night. When Pantelei finished his studies, he entered the service. Vaciliça Vacilievna was no more; she died before this serious event in consequence of a shock: she had seen in a dream a white man mounted on a bear. Her husband soon followed her.

As soon as Pantelei learned of his father's illness he has-

tened to him, but arrived too late. What was the surprise of this dutiful son when, instead of being, as he thought, a rich heir, he saw himself almost reduced to beggary! Such blows are always difficult to bear. Panteleï became unrecognizable. He was a young man badly brought up and impetuous, but good, honest, and generous. He soon acquired, and justly, the reputation of an unbearable and querulous man; he quarrelled with his neighbors, rich and poor: the first recalled his position, and he despised the second. He even showed very little respect to the authorities of the country. "I am," he said, "a noble of the old school." One day he nearly shot the Stanovoi because he entered his house with his cap on. The functionaries whom he so treated never failed, of course, to treat him in the same way every time they had the chance; yet they did not generally care to come in contact with him, on account of the extreme irascibility of his disposition. Hardly had they opened their mouths to make an observation to him when he would propose a duel to the death. At the slightest contradiction, his eyes became haggard. "Ah! go—go—go—go," he generally said in a choking voice, "I care nothing for life!" and he was ready for anything. Moreover, he was of an exemplary probity and never had any quarrels with justice. He lived by himself,—no one came to see him. Whatever he was, this singular being was human, and was not wanting in a certain elevation of character; but he put these qualities in practice in his own way: an injustice, the slightest abuse of power, revolted him; he defended the rights of his peasants with a firmness truly heroic. "How!" he cried, striking his head with his fist, "do they dare to meddle with mine! Am I not Tchertapkanof? If—"

As to Tikone Ivanitch Nédopouskine, he had not such good reason to be as proud of his extraction as Panteleï Érémeïtch. He was the son of an *odnodvoretz*¹ who had only been ennobled at the end of forty years' service. Nédopouskine the father was one of those men whom misfortune pursues with a fury that seems to partake of personal hatred. For sixty years, from the day of his birth to his last hour, the poor devil had struggled against all the miseries that are the lot of men of low condition in Russia; he struggled like a fish caught by the ice; passed sleepless nights,

1. A gentleman reduced to the condition of a peasant, and possessing only the house that he lives in.

was lavish of the humblest salutations, and denied himself the slightest pleasure. After living thus as a real martyr, this really innocent victim of the injustices of his superiors¹ died in a cellar or in a garret, without leaving a morsel of bread to his children. It was in vain that he struggled against misfortune; like a hare taken in a snare, all his efforts were of no avail to burst the bonds that enchaind him. He was a sensible, honest man; though he had no scruples about accepting money from suitors who came to him, he would take ten kopeks to two roubles at the most. His wife was a consumptive; he had had several children, but very fortunately for him they died very young, with the exception of Tikone and of a daughter named Matrona. After passing through many adventures at once grotesque and painful, Matrona ended in marrying an advocate retired from practice. As to Tikone, his father had succeeded in putting him as a supernumerary in an administration of the government; but he left it as soon as his father died. The precarious condition in which he lived, ever struggling against hunger and cold, the sight of his mother's sufferings, the desperate efforts of his father, the gross proceedings of the lodging-house keepers and shopkeepers with whom he dealt,—all these circumstances together had made him extremely timid. Whenever he saw one of his superiors, he trembled and almost swooned from fear like a bird that feels itself taken. He gave up the service. Nature often gives us as our share, with a heedlessness that one might almost qualify as ironical, qualities and tastes that have no relation with our resources and our manner of life. It was thus that nature with her usual generosity and solicitude had made of Tikone the son of a poor clerk, a sensitive, benevolent, idle being, without energy, pleasure-loving, and endowed with an exquisite delicacy of smell and taste, and had been pleased to develop in him these qualities with the greatest care, but yet had condemned him to live upon sour cabbages and putrid fish. Nevertheless he reached manhood; but from that moment his position in this world became of the most curious description. Fate, which had not ceased to be against his father, still pursued him; one might say that it was amusing itself with this sport. But it proceeded with him in a different way: instead of tortur-

1. "I am an innocent victim," all the Russian functionaries say who are driven from the service.

ing him, it diverted itself at his expense. It never reduced him to despair, it never imposed upon him the humiliating sufferings from hunger; but it dragged him about in all corners of Russia, it subjected him to the vilest and most ridiculous duties. Now it was pleased to raise him to the post of major-domo with some old patroness, bilious and exacting; then made him the hanger-on of a rich but avaricious merchant; now it entrusted him with the direction of the private chancellery of a near-sighted seigneur, with his hair cut *à l'anglaise*, and soon after made him an under-butler, a kind of buffoon at a proprietor's who was fond of hunting. In a word, poor Tikone had been condemned by fate to drain to the dregs the bitter cup that is reserved for those who live in a dependent position. He bore all the whims and all the bad conduct that seigniorial idleness could inspire. How many times, on reaching his poor little room, where he had been allowed to go by a numerous company who had been amusing themselves at his expense the whole evening, had he not resolved, while blushing with shame and with tears in his eyes, to flee secretly the next day and try his fortune in the next town; and if he should not succeed in obtaining the position of scribe, to die of hunger in the street! But he was born weak, and the timidity with which Heaven had endowed him held him back; then, was it probable that he would succeed in finding a place? To whom should he apply? "They would have nothing to do with me," muttered the unhappy man, tossing about on his bed. "They would not listen to me." And the next day he again began to drag the ball and chain. There was much the more reason to complain because, in its tender solicitude, nature had not deigned to grant him a shadow of the faculties and talents required to fill successfully the position of buffoon. Thus, for example, he could not dance until he fell from fatigue, dressed in a bear-skin turned inside out, nor indulge in grotesque contortions while saying funny things under the threatening whips that whistled about his ears; when they exposed him quite naked to a cold of twenty-five degrees, he was so foolish as to catch cold; his stomach could not bear the brandy mixed with ink or some other drug, nor the *moukhomers*¹ cut in little pieces and sprinkled with vinegar.

God knows what would have become of Tikone if the last

1. A kind of poisonous mushroom.

of his patrons, a rich builder, had not taken it into his head, one day when he was in a good humor, to write in his will: "As to Leze, called Tikone Nédopouskine, I bequeath him in full ownership my village of Besielendefevka with all its dependencies." Some time after, this generous man had a stroke of apoplexy on leaving the table. As soon as the news spread, justice ran to put on its seals, according to custom. The relatives arrived; the will was opened, the reading took place, and Nédopouskine received an order to present himself. He came; most of the assembled company knew the duties he fulfilled near his patron, and he was welcomed with a chorus of exclamations and ironical congratulations. "The proprietor! Here is the new proprietor!" cried the heirs. "We must admit," replied one of them, known for his keen wit and *bon mots*, "there is what may be called, as you might say, a fine heir. These words were received with a unanimous burst of laughter. Nédopouskine could not believe his happiness. The will was shown him; he blushed, he began to move his arms about, and finally burst into tears. The laughter redoubled and the room re-echoed with the noisy exclamations. The village of Besielendefevka contained only twenty-two peasants; a property of so little importance aroused no envy, and the company could enjoy itself to its fill. One of the heirs, an inhabitant of Petersburg, Rostislaf Adamitch Chtoppel, a well-appearing man, with a Greek nose, and whose regular features were full of dignity, thought it his duty to take up another tone; he sidled up to Nédopouskine and said, looking at him with a scornful air, "I thought I noticed, my dear sir, that you held the position of wit near the respected Fédor Fedorovitch, if I may so express myself." The noble Petersburgian expressed himself much better than the rest of the company. Poor Nédopouskine was too much affected to catch the sense of these words, which were followed by a general silence; the man of *bons mots* began to smile with an approving air. Chtoppel rubbed his hands and repeated his remark. Nédopouskine opened his mouth and raised his eyes in amazement. Rostislaf Adamitch's face assumed a sarcastic expression.

"I congratulate you, my dear sir, I congratulate you," he replied; "it is true that few people would consent to make for themselves a position by the practices that you have not disdained. But *de gustibus non est disputandum*; which means, each one to his own taste. Is it not true?"

A person at the bottom of the room answered this question with a cry of astonishment and admiration.

"Tell me, pray," added Chtoppel, encouraged by the attitude of his hearers, "to what kind of a talent are you particularly indebted for this unhopèd-for favor? Oh, don't blush! Speak; we are here, so to say, *en famille*.¹ Is it not true, gentlemen, that we are *en famille*?"

He to whom Rostislaf Adamitch had addressed this question unfortunately did not know French, and that is why he simply nodded his head affirmatively, and gave a little grunt. But to make amends for this, another heir, a young man whose forehead was covered with yellowish spots, hastened to answer, "*Voui, voui.*"

"Perhaps," replied Chtoppel, "you can walk on your hands with your feet in the air?"

The long-suffering man looked about him in a despairing way. A malicious smile was on the faces of all; their looks sparkled with a cruel joy.

"Perhaps you have the talent of crowing like a cock?"

A general laugh arose among the assembled company, but it was almost immediately suppressed, so much was attention aroused.

"Who knows? your nose—"

"Enough!" cried at that moment some strong resolute voice; "are you not ashamed thus to torment an unhappy man?"

They turned about. It was Tchertapkanof, standing near the door. He was a cousin of the deceased in the fourth degree, and had received a summons. But during the whole meeting he had kept proudly apart from the rest of the company, according to his habit.

"Cease!" he repeated, throwing his head proudly back.

Chtoppel turned quickly, and seeing a man rather badly dressed, with no pretence, asked in a low voice (prudence is never out of place) of one of his neighbors,

"Who is it?"

"Tchertapkanof; not much of any one," his neighbor answered with the same precaution.

Rostislaf Adamitch resumed his assurance.

"Who are you to come and command here?" he said in a nasal tone, with a wink; "a fine bird, indeed! Where do you come from, permit me to ask you?"

1. It must not be forgotten that all the French words in the text, when no note explains them, are in French in the original.

Tchertapkanof blazed up like a package of powder in contact with a match. He became so beside himself with rage that he could not breathe.

"Te-te-te—" he said with an effort as he choked; but almost immediately in a thundering voice: "Who am I? where do I come from? I am of noble stock, and my name is Panteleï Tchertapkanof; my great-grandfather served at the court of the Tzars. And you, who are you?"

Rostislaf Adamitch grew pale and made a step backward. He never expected such an explosion.

"I—a bird! a bird!—oh! oh! oh!"

Tchertapkanof rushed on him; but Chtoppel avoided him with the greatest agitation, and the company threw themselves before the enraged proprietor.

"A duel! a duel instantly, and at the length of a handkerchief!" cried Tchertapkanof with rage; "otherwise beg my pardon and his."

"Do it, do it!" all the heirs who surrounded Chtoppel hastened to say with fright. "He is mad! He will cut your throat!"

"Pardon! pardon! I did not know," stammered Chtoppel; "I did not know."

"And his," replied the pitiless Panteleï.

"I also ask your pardon," added Rostislaf Adamitch, turning to Nédopouskine, who was trembling like a leaf.

Tchertapkanof calmed down, and going up to Tikone Ivanitch, took him by the hand, looked boldly at the assembled company, and meeting no look in return, solemnly left the room, in the midst of a profound silence, in company with the happy proprietor of the hamlet of Besielendefevka.

From that moment they became inseparable. (The hamlet in question was about eight verstes from Bezsonovo.) The feeling of gratitude with which Tchertapkanof's conduct had inspired Nédopouskine was changed little by little into a kind of adoration. This weak man, whose conscience was not absolutely clear, adored the fearless and loyal Tchertapkanof. "It is not a little thing," he often said, "to speak with the Governor and dare to look him in the face. Oh, just Heaven! yet he does it." He admired him immoderately and with all the strength of his nature; he looked upon him as an extraordinary man, of superior intelligence and very learned. The fact was that Tchertapkanof's education, entirely neglected as it had been, would have passed for a brilliant one in comparison with that which his friend had

received. Russian literature had no interest for him, and the French language was so little familiar to him that a Swiss preceptor having asked him one day, "Vous parlez français, monsieur?" he had answered him in Russian, "I don't understand you." Then, after a moment's reflection, he added in French, "Je pas." Yet he had not forgotten that a very clever author named Voltaire had acquired some celebrity in France, and that Frederic the Great, King of Prussia, had been equally illustrious in his time. Among the Russian authors he esteemed above all Derjavine, and Marlinski¹ pleased him so much that he had given the name of Ammalat-Bek² to his best dog.

Some days after my meeting with the two friends, I directed my steps towards the little village of Bezsonovo to pay a visit to Pantelei Érémeitch. His little house could be seen from afar; it rose up in the middle of a spot destitute of trees, at a half-verste from the village, like a hawk in a field on a mound of earth. The only dependencies that could be seen about it were three old wooden houses of different sizes, to wit, a stable, a shed, and a bath-house. Each of these buildings was by itself; there were no gates nor enclosures of any sort to be seen about. My coachman, not knowing where to leave me, stopped before a crumbling well³ full of dirt. Near the shed were several young hounds, thin and rough-haired, gnawing the carcass of a horse, probably Orbaçame; one of them lifted up his bloody snout and uttered a hasty bark, but soon went back to picking the bones of the old courser. At a few steps from the carcass was a young boy of sixteen or seventeen, with a yellow, puffed face; he was barefooted and wore a Kosak's dress. He was probably entrusted with watching the dogs, and followed all their movements with a solemn air, and applied from time to time a blow of his whip to those of them who appeared too eager.

"Is your master at home?" I asked him.

"God knows," he answered me; "knock at the door."

I jumped down from the drochki and went up to the door of the house.

Tchertapkanof's dwelling was rather wretched-looking. The beams of which it was built were blackened by the

1. The first was a lyric poet who wrote at the end of the last century; the second, a Russian author of the romantic school.

2. Person in a romance of Marlinski.

3. All the wells in Russia are made of wood.

weather, and were giving way in several places; the chimney was half in ruins; the corners of the house were rotten and disjointed; the windows, with little bluish squares looking out at the side of the door, had something melancholy that accorded very well with the dilapidated roof of this sad edifice; they recalled the dull bloodshot eyes of old beggars. I knocked at the door; no one answered. Yet there was talking within, and I could make out the following words:

"A, b, c; come, fool!" said a hoarse voice. "A, b, c, d,—that's not the way! D, e, p,—yes, p, p. Catch it; come, now, fool!"

I knocked a second time. The same voice cried out to me, "Come in! Who's there?"

I went into a little dark vestibule, and, the door of the next room being open, I saw Tchertapkanof himself. He was seated on a chair, in large trousers, a boukhare dressing-gown covered with spots, and had a red cap on his head; he was pressing with one hand the snout of a young spaniel, and with the other had a piece of bread that he was putting on his nose.

"Ah!" he exclaimed with dignity, and without changing his position, "I am charmed to see you. Please be seated. I am giving Vinzor a lesson, as you see. Tikone Ivanitch," he added, raising his voice, "come here! some one has come."

"Coming! coming!" answered Tikone Ivanitch from the next room. "Macha, give me my trousers."

Tchertapkanof resumed his teaching, and put back the piece of bread on the dog's nose. I looked about me. There were in the room only an old table with leaves, three of its feet being of unequal length, and four broken straw chairs; the walls were painted white, with little spots that once represented stars; a dim broken mirror, in a wooden frame in imitation of mahogany, was hung between the two windows; several guns, and pipes with long stems, could be seen in the corner; enormous spider-webs hung from the ceiling.

"A, b, c, d, p," said Tchertapkanof slowly; then he suddenly cried out, making one of the strangest contortions, "At it! eat, fool! eat, then!"

But the unfortunate spaniel hesitated to obey. He sat sadly still, his tail between his legs, his nose down, and blinked with a resigned air; he seemed to say,

"Indeed I know that you are the master."

"Come, eat, then! Here, take it," resumed the pitiless Tchertapkanof.

"You have made him afraid," I said to him.

"Well, let him go to the devil!"

He pushed him with his foot. The poor animal rose slowly, let the piece of bread fall, and walked towards the vestibule, putting down his feet with as much caution as if he were walking on tiptoe; he appeared profoundly humiliated. What a way to treat him before a strange person who saw him for the first time!

The door of the next room opened softly, and Nédopouskine entered with a smile on his lips and bowing.

I rose and bowed in my turn.

"Don't disturb yourself, don't disturb yourself," he stammered.

We sat down, and Tchertapkanof went into the other room.

"Have you been pleased to visit our plains long?" Nédopouskine asked me in a sweet voice, cautiously coughing behind his hand, and continuing to cover his mouth with his fingers for a few moments out of politeness.

"Nearly two months."

"Indeed!"

A few minutes' silence followed these words.

"It is very pleasant to-day," resumed Nédopouskine, and he looked at me with a grateful air, as if the weather depended on me. "The crops are really extraordinary."

I bowed assent, and conversation again stopped.

"Panteleï Érémeitch was pleased to kill two hares yesterday," soon resumed Nédopouskine, who was trying to enliven our interview; "yes, two enormous hares."

"Are Tchertapkanof's dogs good?"

"Wonderful!" eagerly answered Nédopouskine, "you may say they are the best in the government." He approached me. "That's nothing astonishing. Panteleï Érémeitch is a man without his equal. All that he wishes, all that comes into his head, is done. Imagine that Panteleï Érémeitch is a man—"

Panteleï entered the room at this moment. Nédopouskine was silent and indicated him with his eyes, smiling, as if to say to me, "You may satisfy yourself of it." We began to talk of hunting.

"Do you wish me to show you my pack?" asked Tchertapkanof; and without awaiting my answer, he called Karp, one of his servants.

Karp came to his master. He was a large fellow in a green nankeen kaftan with a blue collar and livery buttons.

"Go and tell Fomka," Tchertapkanof said to him in a jerky tone, "to bring Ammalat and Saïga here; but let everything be in order, do you understand?"

A smile contracted Karp's large mouth, and he made an inarticulate sound as he left the room. Fomka did not keep us waiting long; he appeared, carefully laced, combed, and in boots, and with two hounds. To be polite, I began to admire these dogs, who, like all of this species, showed little intelligence. Tchertapkanof spat in Ammalat's nostrils, and I must say, by the way, that the dog did not show much satisfaction at it. Nédoپouskine patted Ammalat's back. We resumed the conversation. Tchertapkanof softened little by little; he stopped posing as a brave man, and dilated his nostrils; the expression of his features completely changed. He looked at me and at his friend.

"Ah!" he exclaimed suddenly, "why leave her by herself? Macha! Hey! Macha, come here."

I heard some one move in the next room, but no one appeared.

"Ma—a—cha," cried Tchertapkanof in a caressing voice, "come here. It is nothing; don't be afraid."

The door opened softly, and a young woman of twenty, tall and slender, entered the room; she had the olive complexion of the Bohemians, brown eyes, and hair as black as jet, full red lips, and teeth of a brilliant whiteness. Her costume consisted of a white dress and blue shawl, fastened at the neck by a gold pin; her delicate hands showed good blood. After advancing a few steps with the timidity and awkwardness of a savage, she stopped and cast down her eyes.

"Let me present her to you," said Pantelei Érémeitch. "It is my wife, if you like."

Macha blushed a little, and smiled to conceal her embarrassment. I greeted her respectfully. She pleased me very much. A very sharp aquiline nose, nostrils transparent and slightly dilated, eyebrows well drawn, cheeks pale and a little hollow,—in a word, all her features denoted quick passions and the most perfect *insouciance*. Over her neck and below her hair there grew little curly locks, a sign of strength and health.

She went to the window and sat down. I began to talk with Tchertapkanof, so as not to increase her embarrassment. Macha turned her head a little on one side, glancing

at me out of the corner of her eyes. Her quick glance had something wild and mobile like the tongue of a serpent. Né-dopouskine sat near her and slipped a few words into her ear. She smiled again. When she smiled, a peculiar contraction of the upper lip imparted to her countenance something leonine.

"Ha, ha! you are not easy to manage," I thought, examining attentively, but secretly, in my turn, her slight waist, her somewhat hollow breast, and her quick, angular gestures.

"Well, Macha," said Tchertapkanof to her, "you should offer something to our guest. What are you thinking of?"

"We have preserves," she answered.

"Well, give us preserves, and don't forget the brandy at the same time. And then," he cried out to her as she was going away, "bring the guitar."

"What for? I will not sing."

"Come, now!"

"I don't want to."

"How foolish! You will feel more like it when—"

"What?" Macha asked him, frowning.

"When you are begged," continued Tchertapkanof with a movement of embarrassment.

"Ah, indeed!"

Macha left the room, but she soon returned with the preserves and brandy, and again sat down by the window. The wrinkles of her brow were not yet entirely smoothed out, and her eyebrows went up and down like the antennæ of a wasp. Have you noticed, dear reader, what a wicked air the wasp has? "Come!" I said to myself, "we are going to have a storm." Conversation languished. Né-dopouskine kept silence, and his laugh was somewhat constrained. Tchertapkanof was panting; his face was red and his eyes were starting out of his head. I was about getting ready to leave. Macha suddenly arose, opened the window abruptly, put out her head, and cried in an angry voice to a peasant-woman who was passing, "Aksinia!" The startled woman wished to turn round; but she slipped and fell heavily to the ground. Macha threw herself back and shouted with laughter. Tchertapkanof did likewise, and Né-dopouskine, transported with joy, gave a little whistle. This circumstance completely changed the complexion of affairs. It had sufficed like a flash to dissipate the cloud that threatened us; the atmosphere was cleared.

Half an hour after you would not have recognized us. We were chattering and joking like great children. Macha especially was wonderfully gay. Tchertapkanof devoured her with his eyes. Macha's color became brighter, her nostrils dilated, her look was at once dark and flashing. The young savage was no longer herself. Nédopouskine hobbled along behind her on his flat feet, like a duck in pursuit of its mate. Poor Vinzor himself took part in it. He left the bench under which he had fled in the vestibule, and sat on the door-sill. He looked at us for a few moments, and suddenly began to jump about, barking. Macha ran into the next room, brought her guitar, threw off her shawl, sat down vivaciously, raised her head, and sang a Bohemian song. Her loud tremolo voice recalled the vibrations of a glass bell. She sang forth with passion, then her voice died away. It was impossible not to succumb to the charm of her passionate accents. "Ai! brute, listen to me!" Tchertapkanof began to dance; Nédopouskine stamped his feet; Macha quivered all over, like birch-bark in the middle of a fire; her slender fingers ran over the chords of her guitar, her swarthy throat slowly raised the large beads of her amber necklace. Suddenly she stopped her song and sank down completely tired out, but continued to strike softly the chords of her guitar.

Tchertapkanof listened. He simply shrugged his shoulders a little without stirring from his place, and Nédopouskine shook his head like a grotesque Chinese figure. But Macha soon began with new ardor, and Tchertapkanof went at it more than ever; he touched the floor, raised himself to the ceiling, pirouetted like a teetotum, crying out, "Come! faster!"

"Faster! faster!" repeated Nédopouskine warmly.

It was late in the evening when I left Bezsonovo. Another time I will tell Macha's history to my indulgent readers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRAIRIE.

IT was a day in July; one of those days that one sees when it has been fine for a long time. From daybreak the sky is clear; the dawn does not brighten it up like a vast conflagration, it colors it with a purplish tinge of extreme delicacy; the sun does not look like a ball of red fire as during the time of great droughts, nor has it that flame-colored tinge that it takes before a storm, but a short radiant brilliancy: it comes slowly out of a long thin cloud, and after merrily shining for a few moments is lost in a purplish mist. The transparent border of the upper part of the cloud is covered with little bright silvery veins. But now the rays of the sun begin to flash forth, and the great luminary rises majestically; it seems as if borne into the air. Towards the middle of the day a large number of rounded, very high clouds of a golden gray with a thin white border generally appear; like islands scattered in the middle of a river with its waves of a limpid transparent blue they scarcely move. Farther on they meet, press against each other, and little by little the bands of blue that separate them have disappeared. But like the sky itself, they still seem entirely impregnated with heat and light. The horizon is of a palish lilac, and this uniform tinge remains the same throughout the day. Not the slightest indication of a storm, but here and there bluish rays fall perpendicularly from the sky; it is an almost imperceptible rain watering the soil. In the evenings all the clouds disappear one by one; the last of them, with their vague, blackish outlines, like clouds of smoke, spread out in little roseate flakes about the setting sun. In the very place where it has disappeared as peacefully as it arose, a purplish light springs up for a few minutes above the earth that is becoming darker. Soon after, the evening star appears a little higher; it flashes out and then fades suddenly, only to flash out again, like a light

cautiously moved. On those days the most vivid colors have no brilliancy; everything is softened and seems to bear a certain impress of modesty. The heat is often intense; at times even a burning mist rises up on the hill-sides, but it is driven away by the wind that bears it off afar, and rapid eddies, sure signs of lasting fine weather, rush in their white columns over fields and roads. The atmosphere is clear; in the country there is a mingled odor of wormwood, mown rye, and buckwheat. There is no trace of dampness in the air, even an hour before night falls. Such is the weather for which the farmer sighs when he is preparing to cut his corn.

It was on such a day as this that I was shooting grouse in the district of Tchern, a part of the Government of Toula. I had had very good shooting, and my game-bag was so full that it was cutting my shoulder unmercifully. Already the evening twilight was dying out, and darkness, more and more dense and cold, began to spread through the atmosphere still bright, though no longer crossed by the rays of the sun. I decided to wend my way home. After passing rapidly over a plain covered with bushes, I ascended a little hill; but instead of the plain that I had so often wandered over, with little oak woods on the right and a small white church on the left, I discovered objects and places that were entirely unknown to me. At my feet stretched a narrow valley; straight before me stood up, like a wall, a wood of tufted aspens. I stopped much surprised. "Ah!" I said to myself, trying to find out where I was, "I ought not to have come this way; I have gone too much to the right." Much vexed at this error, I went hastily down the hill. I immediately felt a disagreeable sensation: the air was heavy and damp as in a cellar; the thick, high grass that covered the bottom of the valley was wet and looked as white as a sheet; it was with a painful feeling I stepped down into it. I hastened to get out of it as quickly as I could, and, turning to the left, I went along through the woods. Bats were already describing mysterious circles above the tops of the trees, and their wavering flight was outlined on the background of the sky, which darkness was already invading. A little belated sparrow-hawk passed rapidly in a straight line above the woods; he was hastening back to his nest. "When I reach the other side of the plain," I said to myself, "I shall probably find the road; I have gone a good verste at least out of my way."

I at last arrived at the end of the woods; but there was no trace of a road. Before me stretched the bushes that the mowers had respected; and very far beyond, very far, I thought I made out a barren plain. Again I stopped. "What a strange thing! where am I, then?" I went over in my mind the places that I had gone over since morning. "Ah, I have it now!" I cried to myself; "yonder are the groves of Parakino. Yes, and that must be the forest of Sіндевево. How could I have gone so far out of my way? It is strange! I must go in this direction."

I went to the right, turning round the bushes. But the night was becoming darker and darker; the shades of darkness seemed to be spreading in every direction, and even from above, with the evening mists. I at last came to a narrow, deserted path; I took it, taking care to walk cautiously. As darkness increased, silence became more and more profound. The occasional whistle of a quail was still heard. A little night-bird flying low and silently almost brushed against me, and, very much frightened, swerved to the other side of the way. I came out of the bushes into the fields. It was already difficult to distinguish objects at a little distance; before me the whitish surface of the plain indistinctly spread out; beyond a mass of threatening shadows rapidly advanced on all sides, and in enormous clouds. The noise of my steps re-echoed dully, and the freshness of the air was beginning to be chilly. The sky, which had paled, again colored up little by little, but already it wore the blue of night. A few little stars with twinkling rays appeared here and there.

What I had taken for a forest was a dark hill. "Where am I, then?" I said aloud, stopping for the third time, and looking with a questioning air at my Diana, an English tan-and-white sporting-dog. She was an animal of rare intelligence; but this knowing creature simply wagged her tail, blinked with a tired look, and could give me no advice. I felt humiliated at the embarrassment I had just shown, and started off again at a quick step, as if I had suddenly discovered the direction that I must take. When I had gone round the hill, I found myself in a ravine not very deep, surrounded by ploughed fields. A strange feeling immediately came over me. This ravine was almost like an extended boiler in shape. At the bottom stood several large white stones; one would have thought that they had crawled there to hold a mysterious conference. The as-

pect of this silent, stifling place, above which the sky seemed sadly suspended, oppressed me. A plaintive cry from some animal came from the stones. I hurried back to the top of the hill. Up to that time I had not lost all hope of again finding my way, but now I knew that I was lost; and, no longer trying to recognize the places about, which, moreover, were entirely buried in darkness, I went along at random, taking the stars as a guide. I walked along in this way for about half an hour with much fatigue. It seemed to me that I had never seen such a deserted country: no noise in the neighborhood, not a light in the distance; one hill succeeded another, fields stretched out indefinitely, bushes started up suddenly, almost under my nose. After walking along for some time, I was preparing to lie down, no matter where, until daylight, when I saw that I was on the edge of a precipice.

I quickly drew back, and peered attentively through the half-transparent darkness that was about me. An immense plain appeared indistinctly before my eyes; it was bounded by a large winding river whose surface in places threw out a metallic reflection which permitted one to follow its course. The height on which I was went down almost perpendicularly; it stood out like a gigantic profile in the bluish background of the sky. Opposite, in the angle that the plain formed near a point where the quiet river was like a dark mirror, two little fires appeared at the very foot of the hill; they burned and smoked at a little distance from each other. About them were several men whose shadows moved slowly to and fro; at times a little head with curly hair was suddenly lighted up.

At last I knew where I was; the place was called in the country about, the *Pré Béjine*. It was impossible to think of returning home that night, and yet I was ready to drop from fatigue. I determined to approach the fires and there await the break of day with these men, whom I took for drovers. I descended the height without accident; but I had no sooner let go of the branches to which I was clinging than two white dogs with bristling hair jumped out at me, barking furiously. The sound of several shrill voices re-echoed near the fires, and two or three boys started up. I answered their shouts. They ran towards me, and immediately called off the dogs, who were especially surprised at the unexpected apparition of my Diana. I went towards them.

I was mistaken in taking them at a distance for drovers ; they were simple little peasants from a neighboring village, and were watching a herd of horses. At the time of the great heat, with us, horses are left in the great plains during the night ; they would be too much tormented by gnats and flies in the daytime. The children make a fête of driving the horses in the evening and bringing them back in the morning. Bareheaded and wearing an old frock, they bestride the swiftest colts and rush forth with shouts and noisy laughter ; they swing their feet and their hands ; they jump in the air and kick about in the midst of the long column of yellowish dust that rises up on the road. This joyous uproar spreads through the country ; horses run, with ears pricked up ; at the head gallops, tail in the air and continually changing from one foot to the other, a shaggy cob, with his mane full of thistles.

I told the children that I was lost, and sat down by their side. They asked me where I came from, and when I told them they became silent and moved away a little. Again we exchanged some words ; then I stretched myself under a bush almost entirely without leaves, and looked about me. The sight was magnificent : above the fires a bright circle oscillating incessantly stood out in relief in the midst of the darkness ; the flame on rising threw out at intervals flashes of light beyond this space ; it was like a little tongue of fire that seemed to lick one of the surrounding branches, and almost immediately vanished ; slender shadows stood up from time to time and stretched to the borders of the fires ; light was struggling with darkness. When the brilliancy of the flame was less vivid, the circle of light that surrounded the fires grew narrower, darkness came nearer, and then the head of a bay, brown, or white horse suddenly came out of it, looked at us attentively with dull eyes, while greedily champing a long tuft of grass, then stooped and again disappeared ; only the noise that it made while eating and snorting was still heard. Near the fires it was impossible to distinguish anything in the darkness that enveloped us, but in the distance appeared indistinctly long blackish spots : they were little hills and woods. The vault of heaven was clear and deep ; it was unrolling majestically and at a great height its mysterious splendor. One breathed with happiness this fresh perfumed air,—the air of a summer night in Russia. Scarcely any noise disturbed the silence. Sometimes only, in the river that was running near us, a large

fish leaped out of the water, and the rushes on the bank, softly swayed by the little waves it left behind it, caused a slight rustling to be heard. The fires were still burning, but one could scarcely hear their crackling.

The boys were seated about the fires with the two dogs that had nearly eaten me up. It was a long time before these dogs could accustom themselves to my presence, and while glancing askance at the fire, with a sleepy look, they growled now and then with a very evident feeling of personal dignity; they growled and then uttered little moans, as if they regretted the impossibility of gratifying their desires. The boys were five in number: Fedia, Pavlouchka, Iliouchka, Kostia, and Vavia. It was while listening to their talk that I learned their names, and I will now present them to my readers.

The first, and eldest of all, Fedia, appeared to be about fourteen. He was a well-shaped boy, with features perhaps a little too delicate, but pleasant; his hair was long and curly, his eyes light; a smile at once vague and playful was perpetually on his lips. He must have belonged to a well-to-do family, and was not there from duty, but pleasure. He wore a calico shirt of a color bordering on yellow; a new arniak was thrown over him, and set badly on his narrow shoulders; a horn hung at his blue belt. The boots that he had on his feet were made for him, and not for his father as is often the case in our country. The second boy, Pavlouchka, had black hair standing up straight, gray eyes, prominent cheek-bones, a pale face marked by the small-pox, a large but regular mouth, a very large head, and slender limbs badly joined to his body. He was an ordinary-looking boy, and yet he pleased me very much; he had an open, intelligent look, and the tone of his voice denoted energy. His costume was not spruce; it consisted of a coarse shirt and threadbare linen trousers. The features of the third were rather insignificant: he had a hooked nose, a long, sleepy face, and his whole countenance expressed a kind of sickly anxiety; his pinched lips were firm, his knitted eyebrows met; he seemed to keep his eyes continually fastened on the fire. His yellowish, almost white hair came out in pointed locks from beneath a little fur cap that he always kept pulled down on his ears. He wore *lapti* and a new *onoutchi*,¹ a thick cord twisted three times about his body belted on his

1. A long band of linen or cotton which the peasants tie around their legs.

very neat black cloth coat. Like Pavlouchka, he could not have been more than twelve. The fourth, Kostia, a child of twelve, roused my curiosity by his sad, pensive look; his face was rather small, thin, covered with reddish spots, and narrow at the bottom like a squirrel. You could scarcely see his lips; but his large, black, brilliant eyes, of a liquid brightness, made a singular impression on one; they seemed as if they would like to express something that it was impossible to give in words, at least in their language. He was small, with a weak constitution, and rather poorly dressed. As to the last, Vavia, I did not see him at first; he was stretched on the ground, quietly crouching under a coarse mat, and rarely showing his little head of curly chestnut hair. He could not have been more than seven.

Lying apart under a bush, I gazed at the children. A little kettle hung over one of the fires; it contained potatoes. Pavlouchka was watching the cooking. Kneeling and armed with a piece of wood, he was plunging it into the water that was beginning to boil. Fedia was stretched on the ground, his elbows leaning on his open *armiak*; Iliouchka was near Kostia, and kept winking in a constrained manner; Kostia had his head turned away, and was looking off somewhere in the distance; Vavia lay perfectly still under his mat. I feigned to be asleep. The children began little by little to talk among themselves.

They began to chatter of one thing and another, to speak of their next day's work, of the horses; but Fedia turned suddenly to Iliouchka, and, resuming probably a conversation that my arrival had interrupted, said to him,

"Well, have you seen the *Domovi*?"¹

"No, I have not seen it, and it cannot be seen," answered Iliouchka in a weak, cheerful voice, the tone of which answered wonderfully well to the expression of his face; "I have heard it, and I am not the only one who has."

"Where was he at your place?"

"In the old tank."

"You work at the mill?"

"Yes, certainly. My brother Avdiouchka and myself,—we are glazers."²

"Indeed! you workmen! Well, and how did you hear him?" asked Fedia.

1. Familiar spirit of a house.

2. Workmen who glaze paper.

"This was the way of it : Once it happened to us, myself and my brother, as well as to Fedor of Mikafevo and to Ivan the Squint-eyed, and to the other Ivan, who is from the Belles Collines, and to Ivachka the Dry-Hand, and to still other boys, in all a dozen,—the whole gang. We chanced then to pass the night in the glazing-room—that is, it was not by chance, but by order of the Inspector Nasaroff. He said to us, 'Why should you go home, boys? there is a great deal of work for to-morrow. So, boys, you had better not go home.' So we stayed, and we all lay down on the floor together. But suddenly Avdiouchka said to us, 'What if the Domovi should appear, boys?' He had no sooner said this than some one began to walk above us, up-stairs, near the wheel. We listened. He walked : the boards bent, creaking under his feet; he passed above the place where we were; and then the water began to make a noise; the wheel also turned, it began to go round and round, and yet the sluice-gates were lowered. We wondered who could have raised them up to let the water through like that. The wheel, after turning round, stopped. The walking began again above us, started to come down the stairs, and came down as if in no hurry; the steps creaked under it. It approached the door; it stopped and waited. Suddenly the door opened wide. We were paralyzed with fear. We looked again: it was gone. And then we saw the sieve of one of the boilers move; it rose up higher and higher, it wavered in the air as though some one was moving it, and returned again to its place. And then, at another boiler, a hooked stick jumped up, and fell back in its place; and then again we seemed to hear some one near the door, and suddenly it began to cough, to cough like a sheep,—it's true. We then huddled together. Ah, we had a pretty night of it!"

"Indeed!" said Pavlouchka. "Why did he begin to cough?"

"I don't know; perhaps on account of the dampness."

The children were silent.

"Are the potatoes boiled?" asked Fedia.

Pavlouchka felt of them.

"No, they are still hard. Ah! how that fellow jumped!" he said, turning to the river; "it must be a pike. There is a little shooting-star."

"Brothers, listen to what I am going to tell you," said Kostia in a shrill voice. "Listen well; this is what my father told before me the other day."

"We will listen to you," said Fedia with a patronizing air.

"You know Gavrila, the carpenter of Slaboda?"

"Oh yes, we know him."

"Do you know why he is not cheerful, why he is always silent? Do you know? I will tell you why. He went one day, my father told us, brothers, to look for nuts, in the woods. Well, he started out nutting; but he lost his way: he fell, God knows where. He kept walking, walking, brothers. No! still he did not find his way, and it was already getting dark. At last he sat down under a tree. 'I will wait,' he said, 'for daylight.' He sat down and fell asleep. So then he slept; but he suddenly heard some one call him. He looked. There was nothing! He again fell asleep; again some one called him. He again began to look about; he looked for a long time, and he saw before him a *Roussalka*,¹ perched on a branch; she was swinging to and fro, shouting with laughter; yes, she was laughing. The moon was full, and shone brightly; one could see everything. The *Roussalka* called to him, and still sat there, very white and glittering, on a branch, like a pretty little gudgeon, you would say, or a very silvery *carassin*. The carpenter Gavrila was paralyzed, brothers; and she still continued to laugh, making a motion of her hand to him like that, calling him. Gavrila was just about to rise; he was going to obey the *Roussalka*, brothers, but the Lord sends him an inspiration, as we must believe. He crossed himself, but not without trouble; he said that his hand was like marble, he could hardly move it. What do you think of that, eh! But he had scarcely crossed himself, brothers, when the pretty *Roussalka* stopped laughing and suddenly began to weep; and how she wept! And when she wept, brothers, she wiped her eyes with her hair, and her hair was as green as hemp. And then Gavrila looked at her, looked at her, and began to ask her, 'Why, being of the woods, do you weep like that?' The *Roussalka* answered him, 'You should not have crossed yourself, man; you could have lived with me, in pleasure and joy, to the end of your days. If I weep, if I grieve, it is because you have crossed yourself. And I will not grieve alone; you also, you shall live in trouble to the end of your days.' Having said this, brothers, she disappeared, and Gavrila immedi-

1. Wicked fairies of the forests and rivers.

ately remembered how he could get out of the woods. Only ever since that day he has been sad."

"Indeed!" said Fedia, after a moment's silence. "But how can such vileness ruin a Christian soul, especially as he did not listen to her?"

"Ah! in faith, I know nothing of that," said Kostia, "and Gavrila pretends that her voice was so soft, so plaintive,—like a frog's."

"And your father said this?" asked Fedia.

"Yes, indeed. I was lying in the loft; I heard everything."

"It is astonishing! Why should he be so sad? But he appeared to have pleased her, since she called him."

"Yes, pleased her, indeed!" interrupted Iliouchka. "Ah, yes indeed! She wished to tickle him to death; that's what she wished. That's their business, the Roussalkas'."

"But there must be Roussalkas here also," observed Fedia.

"No," answered Kostia, "this is an open place. But the river is not far away."

They were silent. A prolonged, harsh, almost plaintive sound suddenly arose in the distance; it was one of those incomprehensible sounds that sometimes arise in the night, in the midst of a deep silence, that seems to remain motionless for a moment in the air, then slowly vibrates and dies away. You listen: the sound is imperceptible and yet it exists. One would think that a prolonged cry had been uttered at the horizon, and that some one had answered it in the woods with a shrill penetrating laugh. A gentle rustle ran over the river. The startled children looked at each other.

"May the Cross protect us!" muttered Iliia.

"Ah! you ravens!" cried Pavel, "what are you trembling at? See, the potatoes are boiled."

They all went up together to the kettle, and began to eat the smoking potatoes. Vania alone did not stir.

"Hey! aren't you coming?" said Pavel to him.

But Vania did not come out from under his mat. The kettle was soon empty.

"And have you heard," began Iliouchka, "what happened with us at Varnavitsi, the other day?"

"On the dam?" asked Fedia.

"Yes, yes, at the dam that has been taken away. It was

a vile place, forsooth, vile and ruined. It was entirely surrounded with holes and ravines, and the ravines were full of serpents."

"What happened? Tell us."

"This is what it was. You don't know, perhaps, Fedia, but there is a drowned man buried there; he was drowned a long time ago: then the pond was deep. However, you still see his grave; but with difficulty; it is no longer anything but a little mound of earth. Well, lately the steward ordered Jermil to come to him, and told him to go to the post. Jermil is always sent to the post at our place. He had let all his dogs die: they did not live with him, God knows why, and they never could live there, and yet they said he was a good huntsman. And then Jermil started off to the post; he lingered on the road, and returning he was a little bit jolly. The night was clear; yes, it was full moon. Well, then, Jermil crossed the dam; he could go no other way on account of the road that he had taken. He went along in this way, and he saw on the grave of the drowned man a very curly little white lamb. Thereupon Jermil said to himself, 'I will take it up; why should it be lost?' He got down and took it in his arms. The lamb made no resistance. And then Jermil went up to his horse, who began to snort and shake his head; but he quieted him, mounted him, and started off, holding the animal before him. He looked at the lamb, and the lamb gazed straight in the eyes of the huntsman. Jermil began to be a little afraid; he said to himself, 'I did not know that sheep looked one in the eyes like that.' Yet he recovered himself and began to pat the little animal on the back, saying to him, 'Biacha, biacha,' as you generally do. But then the lamb began suddenly to show his teeth, and repeated 'Biacha, biacha,' exactly as he did."

The child had no sooner said this last word than the two dogs rose together, quickly left the fire, barking spasmodically, and disappeared in the darkness. The children were frightened; Vania came out from under his mat; Pavlouchka rushed with a shout after the dogs. Their barkings rapidly grew fainter and fainter. Soon a confused trampling was heard: it was the horses of the herd running about. Pavlouchka cried out lustily, "Ah! the gray! the Cockchafer!" A few minutes after, the barkings ceased; Pavlouchka's voice was heard only in the distance. Some time passed; the children looked at each other in astonishment, as if waiting to see what would happen. A horse's gallop was suddenly

heard; the horse stopped abruptly near the fire, and Pavel, seizing him by the mane, jumped quickly to the ground. The two dogs also came back into the bright circle and lay down, hanging out their red tongues.

"What was the matter yonder?" the children asked.

"Nothing," answered Pavel, driving away his horse with his hand; "the dogs must have scented something. I thought it was a wolf," he added in an indifferent tone, but quite out of breath.

I had taken a fancy to Pavlouchka. He looked well at that moment. His features were not handsome, but the rapid chase that he had just made brightened them up; they expressed an audacious courage and resolution. Though he had not even a stick, he had not hesitated to rush out into the darkness alone against a wolf. Brave boy! I thought, still looking at him.

"You did not see any wolves, then?" asked the timid Kostia.

"There are always a great many about here," answered Pavel, "but they are only troublesome in winter."

He again approached the fire. In taking his place, he leaned his hand on the shaggy neck of one of the dogs, who, flattered by this familiarity, stood perfectly still for a long time without moving his head, but he looked sideways at Pavlouchka with an expression of pride and satisfaction.

Vania again crawled under the mat.

"What frightful things you have told us, Iliouchka!" said Fedia, who, as the son of a rich peasant, took upon himself the rights of interlocutor (he spoke little himself, as if afraid of taking away from his dignity). "The devil then made the dogs bark. I have indeed heard that this place was haunted."

"Varnavitsi? I should think so! And how bad the place still is! More than once they have seen, I can assure you, the old master, the dead man. He walks, they say, in a kaftan with long skirts, and he sighs incessantly like this; he is seeking for something, I know not what. Once father Trafime met him. 'What are you pleased to be looking for, father Ivan Ivanovitch?' he asked him."

"He asked him that?" said Fedia in amazement.

"Yes."

"Really, Trafime is a fine fellow! And what did he answer?"

"'I am looking for the magic herb,' he said; but he said 'the magic herb' so low—like that. 'And what do you want with this herb, father Ivan Ivanovitch?' 'It suffocates me; the earth suffocates me, Trafime. I wish to leave it; yes, very much.'"

"Indeed!" remarked Fedia; "then he had not, it seems, lived long enough."

"It is astonishing!" said Kostia; "I thought that the dead were only to be seen on the Saturday of Commemoration."

"You can see the dead any time," said Iliouchka with assurance, who, as far as I could make out, knew the popular traditions better than all the others; "but on the Saturday of Commemoration you can also see the living—that is to say, the persons who are to die that year. You have only to sit in the peristyle of the church and look at the road. Those who must die that year you will see pass by. Old Ouliana was under the peristyle last year."

"Ah, indeed! Did she see any one?" asked Kostia with curiosity.

"Certainly. At first she was there a long time without hearing or seeing any one; only from time to time she heard a dog bark, far away, very far away. Suddenly she looked: a child in a shirt passed along the road. She examined it: it was Ivachka Fedocef."

"The one who died last spring?" interrupted Fedia.

"The very one. He walked without raising his head. But Ouliana recognized him. She still looked: a woman was coming along. She examined her, examined her well. God! Lord! it was she herself coming along! Ouliana herself."

"Indeed?" asked Fedia.

"As there is a God, it was she herself!"

"Well, she is not yet dead."

"The year is not yet through; but look at her,—has she long to live?"

The children again became silent. Pavel threw an armful of dry branches on the fire. They quickly blackened on coming in contact with the flame that suddenly rose up, and began to crackle and smoke, and twist and curl up their burnt ends. The quivering light of the fires spread out in every direction in the air. A pigeon just

x. Popular superstition that attributes to an herb the power of overcoming all obstacles.

startled out from God knows where, in the very middle of this bright column, turned round and round timidly, and disappeared flapping its wings.

"He seems to have lost his home," remarked Pavel. "He will fly to some place or other, and then he will sleep until daybreak."

"Tell me, Pavlouchka," said Kostia, "is it not the soul of some just person flying to heaven?"

Pavel threw another lot of branches on the fire.

"Perhaps," he said to his companion.

"Pray tell me, Pavlouchka," asked Fedia, "did you also see at your place the celestial apparition?"

"When there was no sun to be seen? Yes, certainly."

"You must have been very much frightened."

"We were not the only ones afraid. Our master, who had spoken to us of this before, when it began to get dark became afraid. Ah! you should have seen him! And in the isba, the cook, as soon as the apparition appeared, broke with a poker all the dishes in the oven. 'Who will eat now?' she said; 'the end of the world has come.' Soup ran in every direction. And with us, brothers, in the village, you should have heard them! One would have thought that the white wolves were about to appear on the earth and eat up mankind; that birds of prey were about to alight, and that Trichka¹ himself was about to appear."

"What Trichka?" asked Kostia.

"You don't know?" said Iliouchka eagerly. "Where do you come from, brother, if you don't know Trichka? You are blockheads in the village, regular blockheads! Trichka! he is a very strange being who will appear on the earth; a man so strange that he cannot be taken, and with whom they can do nothing; he will be a very wonderful man. The peasants would like to capture him, I suppose; they will go out against him with sticks, they will surround him; but he will throw them into confusion, so that they will begin to kill each other. They will put him in prison, for example; he will ask for water in a little cup; they will bring him a cup; he will vanish, then he will reappear. They will load him with chains; he will strike his hands and his chains will fall off. This Trichka will pass through the towns and villages; and Trichka will be an evil man,—he will deceive the Chris-

1. A tradition, doubtless, about antichrist.

tian people, and they can do nothing to him. He will be a very strange man and very evil."

"Yes," continued Pavel in a drawling voice, "it is so. Indeed, he is the one who is expected among us. The old man said that as soon as the celestial apparition began Trichka would come. Well, the apparition appeared. Every one fled to the fields; they were waiting to see what would happen, and you know that with us the country is open. We looked: some one was coming down the mountain, on the Slaboda side; such a strange man! such a strange figure! All began to cry out with one voice, 'Ah! there is Trichka coming! there he is!' and every one fled. Our Starosta concealed himself in a ditch; his wife crawled under the gate, shouting out with all her might, and so frightened her watch-dog that he broke his chain and fled from the yard beyond the hedge into the woods. Kouska Erofeitch's father hid himself in the oats; he crouched down and began to whistle like a quail; 'Let us hope,' he said to himself, 'that the destroyer of souls will at least spare the birds.' Every one fled. And the man who was coming was our cooper Vavil; he had bought a new cask and had put it on his head."

The children began to laugh, and once more became silent for a few moments, as people do who are talking in the open air. I looked about: the weather was magnificent; the dry heat that generally prevails in the middle of the night had replaced the dampness of evening, and had a long time yet to lie over the sleeping fields; there still remained some hours before the first murmurs of day, before the first drops of dew. There was no moon; it had not yet risen. Thousands of golden stars twinkled in turn and seemed to be moving slowly in the direction of the Milky Way; in looking at them for a long time, one seemed to feel the rapid continuous rotation that was carrying the world along. A strange unearthly cry rose twice in succession from the river, and a few minutes after it was heard farther on.

"What is that?" said Kostia, trembling.

"It is a heron's cry," answered Pavel quietly.

"A heron?" answered Kostia. "And is that what I heard yesterday evening, Pavlouchka?" he said after a moment's silence. "Perhaps you know that also?"

"What did you hear?"

"This is what I heard: I was going from Kamenoigelad to Chachkino; I had first passed by our walnut woods by the

ravine,—to the place where it is steep, you know. There is a hole full of water there, entirely surrounded by rushes. As I went by this hole, some one sighed in the pool, but oh, so sadly! 'Ou-ou-ou.' I was overcome with fear, brothers; it was late, and the voice was so plaintive; plaintive to such a degree that I nearly wept myself. What could it be?"

"Last year, in that hole, robbers drowned the forester Akine," observed Pavlouchka. "Perhaps it is his soul groaning."

"Perhaps so," said Kostia, opening his eyes, already very large. "I did not know that they had drowned Akine in the hole; I would have been still more frightened."

"They say that there are little frogs who cry like that in a plaintive tone," continued Pavel.

"Frogs? No, it was not a frog. Come, now!" (again the heron's cry on the water). "Ah! ah!" said Kostia involuntarily; "that must be the cry of the *Lechi*."¹

"The *Lechi* does not cry; it is dumb," said Iliouchka. "It only strikes its hands and clacks with its tongue."

"You have seen the *Lechi*, then?" said Fedia ironically.

"No, I have not seen it, and God preserve me from it! But others have seen it. The other day it joined a peasant and led him through the woods, and up and down about the same field. He could hardly go home at daybreak."

"And he saw him?"

"Yes. He said it was tall, very tall and dark. He crouched down behind a tree; you could not make him out. He seemed to be hiding from the moon, and he gazed, gazed with his large eyes—he winked; he winked."

"Ah!" said Fedia, pressing his shoulder-blades together, "pfou!"

"Why has such a brood as that spread over the earth?" remarked Pavel; "it seems strange to me."

"No abuse! take care, it will hear," said Iliouchka.

Once more there was silence.

"Look there! see, brothers!" cried Vania suddenly, in his childish voice; "look at the stars of the good God! they move about like bees."

He put out his little fresh face from beneath his mat, leaned on his elbow, and slowly raised his large calm eyes to

1. Spirit of the woods.

the heavens. All the children did the same, and remained so for a few moments.

"I say, Vania," amicably replied Fedia, "is your sister Anouchka well?"

"Yes," answered Vania with a slight stammer.

"Ask her why she does not come and see us, then."

"I don't know."

"Tell her to come."

"I will tell her."

"Tell her I will bring her a present."

"And me also?"

"Yes."

Vania sighed.

"Oh no, I don't wish any. Rather give it to her; she is such a good girl."

And Vania again placed his little head on the ground. Pavel arose and took the empty kettle.

"Where are you going?" Fedia asked him.

"To the river, for a little water. I want a drink."

The dogs rose and followed him.

"Take care, don't fall into the water!" Iliouchka shouted after him.

"Why should he fall?" said Fedia, "he will be careful."

"He will be careful? That's easy enough to say: all kinds of things might happen. When he stoops over to draw the water, the *Vodianoi*¹ might seize him by the hand and draw him in. Then they would say, 'He fell in, the child; he fell into the river.' A nice kind of a fall! There he is going into the rushes; there he is," he added, listening.

The rushes gave out a dull noise.

"Is it true," asked Kostia, "that the idiot Akoulina has been like that since she was under the water?"

"Yes, just as she is now. And they say she was beautiful formerly. The *Vodianoi* spoil her looks. He did not think, doubtless, that they would take her out so quickly; he destroyed her yonder at the bottom of the water."

I had myself often met this Akoulina, covered with rags, horribly thin, her face black as coal, with anxious eyes and projecting teeth; she would paw the ground for hours at a time in the same place on the highway, with her withered hands pressed against her breast, and she would rest slowly now on one foot, now on the other, like a wild animal in a cage. She

understood nothing you said to her, and she giggled spasmodically at times.

"And they say," replied Kostia, "that Akoulina threw herself into the water because her lover deceived her."

"It is true."

"And do you remember Vacia?" added Kostia sadly.

"What Vacia?" asked Fedia.

"The one who was drowned," answered Kostia, "in that very river. What a boy he was! Oh, what a good boy! and how his mother Féklista loved him! They say that she had a presentiment of the misfortune that happened to him on the water. When Vacia started out in summer with us, with the children, to bathe, she always trembled with fear. The other women said nothing, they passed quietly on with their pails; but Féklista would put hers down and begin to call Vacia: 'Come back again, come back, my little light! oh, come back, my little lamb!' And God knows how he happened to be drowned. He was playing on the edge, and his mother was there also: she was pitching hay. Suddenly she heard a sound, as of some one blowing air-bubbles in the water; she looked, and already there was only Vacia's little cap on the water. From that time Féklista has not been right in her mind; she goes and lies down at the place where he was drowned; she lies down, brothers, and begins to sing a song,—you remember what Vacia always sang; then she weeps—she weeps; she is angry with God."

"There is Pavlouchka," said Fedia.

Pavlouchka came back to the fire with the kettle full of water.

"Do you know, boys," he said after a moment's silence, "that it is a bad thing—"

"What, then?" said Kostia hastily.

"Truly. Hardly had I leaned over the water, than I heard some one call like this, in Vacia's voice, and from the bottom of the river: 'Pavlouchka! Hey! Pavlouchka! come here!' I doubted, and yet I took the water."

"Ah! Lord! Lord!" said the other children, crossing themselves.

"It was the Vodianof calling you, Pavel," said Fedia, "and we were just speaking of Vacia."

"Ah! that's a bad sign," said Iliouchka slowly.

"Ah! bah! that's nothing," replied Pavel in a resolute tone. "One does not escape his fate."

The children were silent. It was easy to see that Pavel's

words had made a strong impression on them. A few moments after, they began to lie down about the fires as if getting ready to go to sleep.

"What is that I hear?" suddenly asked Kostia, raising his head.

Pavel listened. "Curlews whistling as they fly along."

"Where are they going?"

"To the country where they say there is no winter."

"Is there such a land?"

"Yes."

"Is it far away?"

"Far, very far away, beyond the warm seas."

Kostia sighed and closed his eyes.

I had been more than three hours with the children. The moon at last appeared. At first I did not recognize it, so small had its crescent become. But the night was none the less beautiful and majestic without moonlight. A great number of stars, that had been very high up in the heavens some hours before, were but a little distance from the dark line that bounded the horizon; everything was plunged in the silence that generally reigns towards morning; everything was reposing in that deep, still sleep that precedes the day. The atmosphere was no longer sweet-scented, it was again impregnated with dampness. How short are summer nights! The children's conversation died out with the fires; even the dogs slept; the horses, as well as I could judge by the feeble light of the stars, also slept, with their heads down. I fell little by little into a state of insensibility. I slept.

¶ I felt a sense of freshness pass over my face. I opened my eyes: day was breaking. The sun had not yet appeared, but the sky was paling in the east. Everything was more distinct, but the outlines still indefinite. The grayish tint of the sky became clearer, colder, and bluer; the stars were shining with a waning light, to soon after disappear. The earth was damp; the leaves were covered with moisture; some sounds of life, voices could be heard here and there; and the morning breeze was already up and skimming the earth. My whole body responded to it with a quiver of joy. I got up quickly and approached the children. They were sleeping soundly about the extinguished fires; Pavel alone rose up a little and gazed at me fixedly.

I nodded to him and went on my way, going along by the banks of the river covered with mist. Hardly had I gone

two verstes, when already before me the vast prairies, the green hills, and behind me on the dusty road, the shining bushes, and the river becoming timidly blue under its veil of mist,—in a word, the whole country about was illumined by the light—at first pink, then red, then golden—of the warm rays of the breaking day. Everything was awake, moving and beginning to sing; large drops of dew sparkled like diamonds, the wind brought me the sound of tinkling bells pure and clear as if they were also impregnated with the freshness of morning; and while I was listening to it, the herd of horses that had been on the prairie passed rapidly before me, under the care of the children whom I had just left.

I must add, to my great regret, that Pavel died within the year. He was not drowned; he was killed by a fall from his horse. I regret him; he was a brave boy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TWO PROPRIETORS.

I HAVE already had the honor, my dear readers, of presenting several of my neighbors to you. Allow me to introduce two other proprietors over whose lands I often shoot. You will be grateful to me for it, I am sure; at least so a writer is inclined to believe. They are well-meaning men, very worthy of esteem, and generally respected in the country about.

I will first describe Viatcheslav Ilarionovitch Kvalinski, a retired major-general. Picture to yourself a tall man, once handsome and well formed, and rather well preserved for his age. He had still a pleasant face, though his features had lost somewhat the regularity that distinguished them in his youth; his cheeks were flabby; there was a halo of little wrinkles about his eyes, and some of his teeth were gone; his light hair, or at least what there was left of it, had taken a purplish tint by virtue of an elixir bought of a Jew who passed himself off as an Armenian at the horse-fair of Romen. But nevertheless Viatcheslav Ilarionovitch walked with his head in the air, making his spurs jingle as he went along; he curled his mustache, his laughter was noisy, and he called himself an old trooper, contrary to the habit of old men, who do not like, as one knows, to have the epithet of "old man" applied to them. The frock-coat that he generally wore was buttoned up to his throat, a large false-collar rose above his neck-cloth, and his gray trousers were of a military cut. His hat was tipped forward, and left the back of his head completely uncovered. He was an excellent man; but his principles and habits were rather strange. As, for example, he took good care not to treat the poor or untitled seigneurs as his equals; he generally looked askance at them, while flattening his cheeks against his white starched collar, or else he examined them silently with a cold, steady stare, making the skin of his forehead move up and down. In talking with them, he cut his words short in a peculiar

way. Instead of "*Je vous remercie, monsieur,*" he never failed to say, "*J'vous merci, m'sieur.*" As to persons of a lower rank, he behaved towards them in a still stranger way: he did not look at them at all, and repeated several times in succession with a preoccupied air, when he wished to express a desire to them or give them an order, "What's your name, what's your name," taking care to emphasize the last word, and swallowing the rest of the phrase,—which recalls the quail's song in a singular manner. Though he was selfish and over-scrupulous, his estate was badly managed; he had for a steward a Little Russian, an old sub-officer, an extremely narrow-minded man. But of all the proprietors of the district, the one who excelled him in this respect was a high official from Petersburg, who, on learning from his steward's report that the drying-rooms of his village were often burnt up, from which great loss resulted, gave orders under the severest penalties that they were not to fill them with sheaves until the fire¹ had been completely put out. The same proprietor had ordered his steward to plant all his fields with poppies. This was the result of the finest calculation; for poppies being dearer than corn, their culture brought him in more. He had also made all the women of his village take as a head-dress *kakochouks*² cut after a model that he had sent them from Petersburg; they obeyed him, still, however, retaining their ordinary head-dress, which gave them a very singular appearance.

But to return to Viatcheslav Ilarionovitch. He admired the fair sex, and when he happened to see a pretty face on one of the streets of the village of the district he immediately went in pursuit. But he was instantly seized with an unfortunate limping that stopped him: this fact is assuredly very worthy of remark. He liked to play cards, but only with his inferiors, who naturally my-lorded him, and with them he indulged all the whims that came into his head. But when he had the honor of having as a partner the Governor or some other official, an astonishing change came over his whole person; he smiled, put on a finicky air, gave his eyes an expression of sweetness that would soften the hardest hearts. Better still: if he lost, he never complained. Reading had little attraction for Viatcheslav Ilarionovitch, and while engaged in that occupation his

1. They thrash the corn in Russia only after drying it in sheaves in ovens designed for the purpose.

2. An old head-dress of the Russian peasant-women, now generally given up.

mustache and eyebrows never ceased moving up and down, down and up, as if an invisible wave was passing over his face. This movement was never more noticeable than when Viatcheslav Ilarionovitch, being on a visit, of course, was skimming through the columns of the *Journal des Débats*. At the time of the elections of the nobility he took rather an important part, but never accepted the post of the Marshal of Nobility,¹ from a spirit of economy. "Gentlemen," he usually said to the assembled company, in a dignified and patronizing tone, "I am very grateful for the honor you have done me; but I have made up my mind to devote my leisure to solitude." After saying this, he would raise his head, turn it several times in all directions, and then rest his chin softly on his neck-cloth. In his youth he had been attached as an aide-de-camp to a grand personage of whom he always spoke rather familiarly. They say that he fulfilled in addition to his service other duties than that of aide-de-camp, but it is very possible that the assertion may not be well founded. Moreover, Kvalinski himself hardly liked to speak of his military career, and that is rather extraordinary. I don't know that he ever made a campaign. General Kvalinski lived in a little house by himself; he had never enjoyed the sweet bonds of matrimony, so he still considered himself a marrying man, and even as rather a good match. But he had for a housekeeper a woman of thirty, a very attractive brunette, whose upper lip was adorned with a little mustache; she wore on week-days starched dresses, and on Sundays she added muslin sleeves. Viatcheslav Ilarionovitch shone at the great banquets that the seigneurs of the district gave in honor of the Governor and other authorities; and it was there, you might say, he was at his best. When he was not at the Governor's right, he was as near as possible. At the beginning of dinner, the General had a manner full of dignity; he leaned back, without turning his head, and looked sideways at the round necks and collars of his fellow-guests. But he became animated little by little, and at dessert he smiled on every one (he had never ceased, of course, smiling on the Governor), and generally even proposed a toast to the fair sex, whom he called the ornament of our planet. Viatcheslav Ilarionovitch also liked to take part in public ceremonies,

1. From the reign of Catherine II., the nobles have the privilege of choosing their chief to represent them and to take charge of the estates of the nobles' orphans.

such as examinations, exhibitions, and assemblies ; and it was with a particular grace he approached the priests to receive their blessing. The General's servants behaved themselves with the greatest discretion at the end of the gatherings that he honored with his presence, gently drove away the curious, saying to them in a deep voice, "Permit me, permit me ; let General Kvalinski pass ;" or, "Here ; General Kvalinski's carriage." Yet this carriage was of a very old style ; and the liveries of General Kvalinski's lackeys were no newer (though this detail be of little importance, I will add that they were of gray cloth with red trimmings, like those of all the other Generals). His horses were also of a respectable age ; but he made no pretensions to elegance, and disdained all that could lead you to believe that he was trying to dazzle the public. Eloquence was not his strong point, or at least he had never given the world a chance to appreciate his talent for eloquence, for he avoided with the greatest care not only the shade of a dispute, but all discussion and even all prolonged conversation with any one whatever, above all with young people. This was, indeed, very prudent ; at the time in which we live we are only too apt to forget, in the heat of conversation, the respect due to titled men. When General Kvalinski was in the presence of his superiors he generally kept silent ; he associated only with persons of a lower rank than his own, and for them he seemed to have little esteem. He also spoke to them in a dry, sententious tone, and at times even unkindly : "Do you know that you are raving ?" "I must recall to you the respect—" Or else : "Don't forget, my dear sir, with whom you are dealing," etc. It was above all for postmasters, councillors of tribunals, heads of the relays on the highway, that the General was truly a redoubtable person. Moreover, he entertained no one, and passed for a niggard. But he was not the less considered a very intelligent proprietor. "He is *un vieux grognard*, a man of principle, an incorruptible conscience," his neighbors said of him. The government attorney was the only one who dared to smile when they spoke of the solid qualities of General Kvalinski : but jealousy blinds us.

Now we will speak of the second proprietor to whom we wish to introduce you.

Mardari Apollonitch Stégounof resembled Kvalinski in nothing ; I doubt whether he had fulfilled the smallest public office, and assuredly he never had been a handsome

fellow. He was a little old bald-headed man, with little pudgy hands, a large stomach, and a double chin; a great lover of ease, and a jovial, very hospitable character. He was only known in one costume, which he wore winter and summer—a striped-silk wadded dressing-gown. The only point of resemblance between him and his neighbor was that he was, like him, a bachelor. His peasants amounted to five hundred in number, but he took little interest in them. To conform to the manners of the time, he bought, some twelve years ago, of a machine manufacturer,—Boutenop of Moscow,—a thrashing-machine that he always kept under lock and key in a shed. When, on a fine summer's day, he took a fancy to have his drochki hitched up to go into the fields, he confined himself to looking at the corn, and especially took a pleasure in gathering bluets. The house in which he lived was old, and kept up in the old way. The ante-room smelt, as usual, of kvass, tallow candles, and leather; to the right was a sideboard on which were pipes and dishes; on the walls of the dining-room hung family portraits covered with fly-specks, and there were to be seen also a squeaking spinet and a large pot of geranium. The furniture of the drawing-room consisted of three sofas, as many tables, two mirrors, and a ramshackle clock whose hands of embellished bronze could scarcely be seen on the blackened face; his study was adorned with a table covered with papers, a blue screen ornamented with engravings borrowed from works that dated from the last century, with a cupboard full of musty-smelling books, spiders and rust; opposite this library was a large arm-chair; the window was *à l'italienne*, and the window that led to the garden was boarded up. In a word, everything was arranged after the old-fashioned idea. Mardari Apollonitch's servants were very numerous, and all dressed in the old way: they wore long blue kaftans with a straight collar, yellow waistcoats, and very short trousers of an undecided tinge. They gave the title of father to the people who visited their master. The Burgomaster of the village, a peasant with a long beard, managed the estate; a decrepit, avaricious old woman, with a colored band about her head, looked after the house. Mardari Apollonitch's stables contained thirty horses of all colors and sizes; his state carriage was a barouche built by his own people and weighed a hundred and fifty *pounds* at least. He heartily welcomed all those who came to see him, and treated them *à la russe*; he filled

them with such nutritious viands that it was entirely impossible for them, when evening came, to do anything else but play *préférence*. As to himself, he was constantly idle, and had not even the courage to read the *Sonnik*.¹ Yet proprietors of this kind are still rather common in Russia. You will ask, perhaps, why I have chosen such a person. Instead of answering this question, allow me to tell you of one of my visits to this neighbor. I went to his house one summer's day, towards seven in the evening. He was just assisting at vespers, and the priest—a young man recently from a seminary, most probably, for he seemed very timid—was still in the room, seated near the door, on the edge of a chair. Mardari Apollonitch gave me a very gracious welcome, as usual; he did the same to all those who came to see him, and these marks of interest were perfectly sincere; he was unusually kind. The priest rose and took off his cap.

"Wait, wait, my father," Mardari Apollonitch said to him, holding him by the hand. "Don't go away; they will bring you brandy."

"I don't drink it," the priest answered with an embarrassed air, and he blushed to his ears.

"Come, now," replied Mardari Apollonitch, "why should not a man of your calling drink? Michka, Iouchka, brandy for the father."

Iouchka, a tall, thin old man of seventy at least, entered with a glass of brandy on a dark-colored plate with rosy spots, the remains of mythological nudities.

The priest repeated that he did not drink brandy.

"Drink, my father; don't stand on ceremony; it is not right," my host said to him in a reproachful tone.

The unfortunate young man gave in.

"Now, father, you may retire."

The priest began to bow himself out.

"Very well, go. He is an excellent man," continued Mardari Apollonitch, looking after him; "I am very well satisfied with him. Only he is too young, and he has a mania for sermons. And you, my dear friend, how are you, eh? Come out on the balcony; the evening is so beautiful."

We made ourselves comfortable on the balcony, and conversation began. But my host, on looking into the garden, became strangely agitated.

1. Interpreter of dreams.

"To whom do those chickens belong?" he cried; "those chickens in the garden, whose are they? Iouchka, Iouchka, go and find out immediately! Whose chickens are those running in the garden? whose are they? Have I not forbidden it long ago? How many times must I repeat it?"

Iouchka went off running.

"What disorder!" repeated Mardari Apollonitch; "it is frightful!"

I can still see the unfortunate chickens that aroused his wrath. There were three of them: two speckled ones, and a white one with a top-knot. They were still walking quietly under the apple-trees, showing from time to time their satisfaction by little cluckings, when Iouchka suddenly appeared, bareheaded, with a stick in his hand; he was followed by three middle-aged servants who hastened in pursuit of the culprits. The chase began: the chickens cried, flapped their wings, jumped, and uttered deafening cries. The servants followed them, stumbling and falling; the master vociferated like one possessed, from the height of the balcony, "Catch them! catch them! Whose are they? whose are those chickens?" At last one of the servants succeeded in seizing the one with a top-knot, falling on it with his whole body, at the risk of crushing it. At the same moment a little girl of about twelve jumped over the wall that bordered the street; she was very much frightened and held a stick in her hand.

"Ah! there is the one to whom they belong," cried the proprietor with an air of rejoicing. "They are Ermila the coachman's chickens; he has sent his Natacha to bring them back. He took good care to send Paracha," added the proprietor in a low voice, and he smiled in a significant way. "Hey, Iouchka! leave the chickens. Bring Natacha to me."

Before the gasping servant was out of sight, the house-keeper came out from I know not where, seized the poor child by the arm, and gave her several blows on the back.

"That's right! that's it!" cried out the proprietor; "ti! ti! ti! ti! ti! ti! And now bring me the chickens, Avdotia," he added, raising his voice, and he turned to me with a radiant air: "How did you like the chase, hein? I am in quite a perspiration."

And Mardari Apollonitch began to laugh.

We remained on the balcony. The evening was indeed very beautiful. Tea was served.

"Are the peasants' houses that I see yonder, on the edge

of the ravine, near the road, yours?" I asked Mardari Apollonitch.

"Yes. What are you driving at?"

"Then, Mardari Apollonitch, you are very guilty. Those houses are small and miserable; not a shrub to shade them. No ponds in the village; I have seen but one well, and that is in bad condition. Is it possible that you have not a more suitable situation? They assure me that you have taken from the peasants their old hemp-fields."¹

"What would you have?" answered Mardari Apollonitch. "The fault is in the new register. Do you know that I have there your register" (he turned his back to me), "and I don't know what good the government expects of this register. As to the hemp-fields that I have taken from these peasants, and for the ponds that I have not dug for them, that is my business. I am a plain man, a man of the old time. In my opinion, the master should behave as master, and the peasant as peasant. That's the way I look at it."

A reasoning so profound was unanswerable, and I kept silent.

"Besides," he continued, "these peasants are good for nothing; they are men that I have completely disgraced. I have yonder two families, especially, whom my father—God have pity on his soul!—could not endure. As to myself, I will tell you I have noticed one thing; that is, that the son of a thief is always a thief. You may say what you like, it is so. Oh, blood, blood is a great thing!"

The day had become very quiet; at times only a breath of air would come and die away as it reached the house. Hardly had my host stopped speaking when one of these passing breaths brought to our ears dull, measured sounds that seemed to come from the stable. Mardari Apollonitch was holding a saucer full of tea to his lips, and was about to swallow it after opening his nostrils, as every good Russian does in such a case. He stopped, listened, made a sign of assent with his head, swallowed his tea and placed the saucer on the table; a good-natured smile lighted up his face, and, as if he wished to accompany the sounds that he heard, he began to say, "Tchiouki, tchiouki, tchiouki, tchiouki, tchiouki."

"What does that mean?" I asked him with surprise.

1. When they remove a village, they generally leave to the peasants the enjoyment of their old hemp-fields in order not to lose the pasture. Hemp demands a great deal of care.

"It is a little scamp they are punishing by my orders. Vacia, the butler, you know."

"Who is this Vacia?"

"Do you remember the servant who waited at table,—the one with the large whiskers?"

Mardari Apollonitch's serene expression, as he looked at me at that moment, would have disarmed the most indignant man.

"What's the matter, young man?" he said to me, shaking his head. "Am I a robber that you look at me like that? Who lives well chastises well; you should know that as well as I."

At the end of a quarter of an hour I took leave of Mardari Apollonitch. On going through the village, I saw Vacia, the butler. He was walking along cracking nuts. I told the coachman to stop, and called the servant.

"Well, brother," I asked him, "you were punished to-day?"

"How do you know?" asked Vacia.

"Your master told me."

"The master himself?"

"But why did he punish you?"

"I deserved it, father; I deserved it well. They don't punish without reason here. We know nothing about that here; ni, ni. The master is not one of those seigneurs; he is—you will not find his like in the whole government."

"Go on!" I cried to the coachman. "That is, then, Old Russia!" I said to myself, and we started off.

CHAPTER XIII.

KOR AND KALINITCH.

PERSONS who have chanced to pass from the district of Bolkhof into that of Jizdra must doubtless have been struck by the difference between the race of men who live in the Government of Orel and the population of Kalouga. The peasant of the Government of Orel is under-sized, short-necked, and has a sullen look; he lives in miserable isbas of aspen, he is bound to feudal service, takes no interest in commerce, is badly fed, and wears lapti. On the other hand, the peasant of the Government of Kalouga is lodged in very spacious isbas of pine, and pays a rent to his lord, by means of which he is almost free and does as he wishes; he is tall, with a cheerful, bold look and a clear white complexion; he deals in oil and tar, and wears boots on Sunday. The villages of the Government of Orel (we speak especially of the eastern part of that government) are generally in the middle of cultivated fields, and near a ravine transformed into a sort of muddy pond. The only trees that are to be found here are willows whose branches are always trimmed, but which come out again very quickly, and three or four wretched birches. The isbas lean against each other; the thatch that covers them is often rotten. The villages of the Government of Kalouga, on the contrary, are generally in the midst of woods; the isbas are larger, better laid out, and roofed with boards; the gates shut tight; the hedge surrounding the yard is not half down, inviting in all the pigs that pass along the street. The shooting is better in the Government of Kalouga. In that of Orel the last woods and the last *places*¹ will have disappeared entirely in a few years, and already there are no longer any moors. In the Government of Kalouga, on the contrary, the forests are hundreds of verstes long, the swamps are no less extensive, and the noble grouse

1. The name given in the Government of Orel to large clumps of bushes. The dialect of the Government of Orel is distinguished in general by a great number of peculiar expressions, some of which are very concise and often very odd.

has not yet disappeared ; there you will also find the foolish snipe, and the restless partridge, that astonishes and startles both dogs and sportsmen by his quick, abrupt flight.

On going into the district of Jizdra to shoot, I met on the plain a little proprietor of the Government of Kalouga ; his name was Poloutikine, and he was passionately fond of shooting. He was an excellent man, but with some weaknesses ; as, for example, he proposed for all the rich matches of the government, and when he was refused, as well as forbidden the house, he confided his disappointment with a sorrowful heart to all his friends and acquaintances, and continued to send as a present to the parents of the young person sour peaches and other products of his garden. He was also fond of telling the same story over and over again, and in spite of his greatest art no one laughed ; he praised the works of *Akime Nakitnoff*,¹ and the story entitled *Pinna* ; he stammered, called his dog Astronomy, used all kinds of provincialisms, and introduced French cookery, the whole secret of which, according to his cook, consisted in constantly changing the natural flavor of each dish. The meat so prepared by this artist takes a flavor of fish, fish that of mushrooms ; macaroni smells of powder ; finally, in the soup the smallest bit of carrot is shaped like a rhomboid or a trapezoid. In spite of all these little eccentricities, Poloutikine was, we repeat, an excellent man. The first time that I met him he invited me to come and pass the night with him.

"I live about five verstes from here," he added ; "it is too far to go on foot, so we will first go to Kor's." The reader would not care to have me give his stammering.

"Who is he?"

"One of my peasants. It is very near here."

We started off in that direction. Kor's isolated house stood in the middle of a wood, on a little plain entirely destitute of brushwood and well cultivated ; it consisted of several buildings joined by hedges ; the principal isba had a porch supported by little pillars. We entered : a young lad of twenty, slender and with a pleasant face, came to meet us.

"Ah ! Fédia, is Kor at home ?" asked my companion.

"No ; Kor has gone to town," answered the young man, smiling and showing a row of teeth white as snow. "Would you like to have the *téléga* harnessed ?"

1. An old Russian satirist.

"Yes, brother; bring us kvass."

We went into the isba. No Souzdal¹ picture defaced the handsome beams of the house; a little lamp burned in a corner, opposite a massive image covered over by a silver plate; the table of linden-wood had just been scraped and washed; between the joists and in the window-frames were no active *proussak*² nor pensive cockroach. The young peasant soon returned with a large white bowl full of good kvass, and a dozen salted cucumbers swimming about in a wooden bowl. He placed all these provisions on the table, leaned against the door, and began to look at us, smiling from time to time. We had no sooner finished breakfast, than the noise of a *téléga* was heard before the porch. We went out. A boy of fifteen, with curly hair and red cheeks, was seated on the box like a coachman, and was holding in with a great deal of trouble a well-fed stallion. About the *téléga* were six young giants very much like Fédia.

"They are Kor's sons," remarked Poloutikine.

"Little *Korki*,"³ immediately answered Fédia, who had followed us on to the porch; "and that is not all of them. Patape is in the woods, and Pidor has gone with old Kor to town. Look sharp, Vacia," he added, addressing the coachman; "go as fast as you can; you are driving the master. But take care of the ruts; otherwise you will overturn the *téléga* and disturb the master's stomach."

The auditors welcomed this pleasantry of Fédia's with smiles.

"Put Astronomy in!" said Poloutikine majestically.

Fédia lifted the dog with small relish, and put him in the bottom of the *téléga*, the dog showing his teeth during this operation.

Vacha let go the reins and off we started.

"That is my office," said Poloutikine suddenly, pointing out a little low house. "Will you come in?"

"I should like nothing better."

"It is not used now," he added, getting out, "but still it is worth looking at."

The office consisted of two empty rooms. The guardian, a squint-eyed old man, ran in from the back yard.

1. An old town in the north of Russia where they make a great many images and illuminated engravings.

2. Little cockroaches brought by the Russian armies from Prussia into Russia, after the Seven Years' War.

3. A play upon words: *kor* signifies *polecats* in Russian, and *korki* is the diminutive of its plural.

"Good-day, Minaitch," Poloutikine said to him; "but where is the water?"

The old man disappeared, and soon came back with a bottle of water and two glasses.

"Taste that," Poloutikine said to me; "I have an excellent spring."

We each drank a glass of water, and while we were drinking, the old man never stopped making us the most profound bows.

"Now," resumed my new friend, "I think we can go on. Here I sold to the merchant Alliloueff four déciatines of woods at a very good price."

We got into the téléga, and at the end of half an hour we were in the seignorial yard.

"Tell me, pray," I asked Poloutikine during supper, "why doesn't Kor live with your other peasants?"

"This is why. He is an intelligent man. About five-and-twenty years ago his isba burnt down; he then came to see my father and said to him, 'Allow me, Nikolai Kousmitch, to settle at the bottom of the woods, in the swamp. I will pay you a good abrok.' 'What do you mean,' asked my father, 'settle in the swamp?' 'Yes,' he answered; 'only, father Nicolai Kousmitch, you must require no more work of me; but you can ask me any abrok you like.' 'Fifty roubles a year?' 'Very well.' 'But no delay; be careful of that.' 'You may be sure that you will have it.' And then he settled in the swamp; since that time he has been called Kor."

"And has he become rich?" I asked.

"Oh yes. He now pays a hundred roubles abrok a year, and would pay more if I wished. I have already told him more than once, 'Buy your freedom, Kor; I mean it; buy it.' But the scamp wished to persuade me that he had not the money; he said that he had not a sou. Yes, I believe that indeed!"

The next day we went out shooting after we had had tea. In going through the village, Poloutikine stopped at a low hut and called out in a loud voice, "Kalinitch!"

"Coming, my little father, immediately," cried out some one behind the door; "I am putting on my lapti."

We walked on; on leaving the village, we were joined by a man of forty, very tall and thin, and with a small head and a slight stoop: it was Kalinitch. His good sun-burnt face, marked here and there by small-pox, pleased me at first sight.

Kalinitch (as I afterwards learned) went shooting with his master almost every day, carried his game-bag, and sometimes even his gun; marked down the game, brought water, gathered strawberries, built little huts of branches, and went after the drochki; in a word, Poloutikine could not do without him. Kalinitch was a man of a sweet, cheerful disposition; he was always singing, and looking incessantly about him with a careless manner. He spoke a little through his nose; when he smiled, he blinked his light blue eyes a little, and often carried his hand to his thin pointed beard. He walked slowly, but with very long strides, leaning lightly on a long thin pole. He spoke to me more than once during the day, and in doing anything for me was not at all obsequious; but he was as attentive to his master as to a child. When the intolerable heat of the day at length decided us to seek shelter, he took us to the place where his hives were, at the bottom of the woods. Arrived there, Kalinitch opened the door of a little isba full of tufts of fragrant herbs hung on the walls and ceiling; he made us comfortable in fresh hay, and putting on a kind of sack with an opening closed by a sieve, he took a knife, a pot with a little firebrand, and went to cut us some honeycomb. After we had done honor to his honey, which was still warm and transparent, we drank a few mouthfuls of spring-water, and soon after fell asleep to the monotonous buzzing of bees and the rustling of the moving leaves.—I opened my eyes, and saw Kalinitch; he was seated on the threshold of the half-open door, and was making a wooden spoon with a knife. For a long time I admired the frank, natural expression of his features, as clear as the evening sky. Poloutikine woke up in his turn. We still lay there for a few moments. It is pleasant, after a long walk and a deep sleep, to remain stretched out motionless on the hay: such repose has a wonderful charm; a soft warmth spreads over the face, and a delicious laziness weighs down the eyelids. We finally arose, and resumed our shooting until evening. At supper I again spoke of Kor and Kalinitch.

“Kalinitch is a good peasant,” Poloutikine told me; “he is an obliging, zealous man, but yet he cannot keep his household in order; I continually disturb him. He goes shooting with me every day, and naturally he cannot look after his house. Judge for yourself.”

I agreed with him, and we went to bed.

The next day Poloutikine was obliged to go to town to

transact some business with a neighbor, named Pitchoukoff, who had ploughed a corner of land and whipped a peasant-woman belonging to my host. I went shooting by myself, and in the evening went to see Kor. I found on the threshold of the door a bald-headed old man, short, robust, and broad-shouldered: it was Kor himself. I examined him with curiosity. The cast of his face recalled that of Socrates: he had a high, knotted brow, little eyes, and a turned-up nose. We went into the isba together. The boy who had received us the evening before, Fédia, brought me some milk and black bread. Kor sat down on a bench, and began to talk with me while stroking his bushy beard. He seemed to be aware of his own merits; he spoke and acted slowly, and chuckled now and then through his long mustaches.

We spoke of the sowing, the harvest, and everything that could interest a peasant. He always seemed to agree with me; but at last I felt somewhat ill at ease, and saw that my questions were out of place. Our conversation had something strange about it. Kor expressed himself obscurely, doubtless from prudence. Here is a specimen of it.

"Listen, Kor," I said to him, "why do you not buy your freedom?"

"Why should I? Now I know my master and the abrok I must pay; we have a good master."

"Liberty is, however, preferable," I observed.

Kor looked at me stealthily.

"Oh yes," he said.

"Why, then, don't you buy your freedom?"

Kor shook his head.

"With what, father," he said to me, "would you have me buy it?"

"Come, now, old fellow!"

"Let Kor become a free man," he continued as if speaking to himself; "whoever didn't wear a beard¹ would be his superior."

"Then cut your beard."

"What is a beard? It is grass; you can cut it."

"Well?"

"Kor would then be a merchant at once, wouldn't he? A merchant's life is pleasant, and they wear beards."

"But don't you do a little business?" I asked him.

"Yes, we trade a little; a little commerce, a little oil, a lit-

1. In Russia people of the upper class and clerks do not wear a beard.

tle tar. But doubtless, little father, you would like to have the téléga hitched up?"

"Well," I thought, "you have good control of yourself and your tongue." "No," I said to him aloud, "I don't want the téléga; I shall shoot about here to-morrow, and, with your permission, I will pass the night in the hay-loft."

"You are welcome. But will you not be more comfortable in the shed? I will tell the women to spread a sheet there and give you a pillow. Hey! women!" he cried out, rising. "Hey! women! come here! And you, Fédia, go with them; women are such fools."

A quarter of an hour after, Fédia, armed with a lantern, led me into the barn. I threw myself on the sweet-smelling hay, and my dog curled himself up at my feet. Fédia wished me good-night; the door creaked and closed with a slam. It was a long time before I fell asleep. Soon a cow approached and breathed hard against the door two or three times; my dog gave a deep growl. A pig passed by in his turn, grunting thoughtfully. A horse began to munch the hay and to snort close by me. At last I fell asleep.

At daybreak I was awakened by Fédia. This active, cheerful boy pleased me very much, and I also thought him to be old Kor's favorite. They bantered one another in a very friendly way. The old man came to meet me, and—I don't know whether it was because I had passed the night under his roof—showed me much more attention than he had the evening before.

"The samovar is ready," he said to me, smiling; "come and drink tea."

We took our places about the table. A robust peasant-woman, one of my host's daughters-in-law, brought a pot of milk. All of Kor's sons came into the isba, one after the other.

"You have a fine family," I said to the old man.

"Yes," he answered, breaking a little piece of sugar with his teeth; "I don't think that I or my old woman have anything to complain of."

"And they all live with you?"

"All. They like it better, and live as they please."

"And they are all married?"

"There is a thorough scamp who is not married," he said to me, indicating Fédia, who, as usual, was leaning against the door. "As to Vaska, he is still too young, and can wait."

"Why should I marry?" said Fédia; "I am happy enough

without it. What need have I of a wife? Is it to quarrel with her?"

"Come, you I know you," replied the old man slyly. "You wear a silver ring. You like to romp with the *dvorovi's* girls. You should blush for it, brazen-faced as you all are. I know you, my fine lad with the white hands."

"What good is there in a peasant-woman?"

"Peasant-women are workers," said Kor gravely. "The peasant-woman is a workwoman in the house."

"What need have I of a workwoman?"

"That's so; you would rather have the brands plucked out of the fire by the hands of others. We know lads like you."

"Well, if it is so, marry me. Come, I say, why don't you answer?"

"That's all right. Be silent, you mischievous wag; you see we tire the master. I will marry you, don't be afraid. And you, father, don't be angry; pardon him, he is a child; he has not yet had time to acquire much judgment."

Fédia shook his head.

"Is Kor at home?" said a well-known voice outside; and Kalinitch entered the *isba*, a bunch of field-strawberries in his hand; he had gathered them for his friend Kor. The old man welcomed him joyfully. I looked at Kalinitch with surprise; I had not expected such delicate attention on the part of a peasant.

I started out shooting that morning nearly four hours later than usual, and passed the three next days at Kor's house. The two friends interested me very much. I do not know how I gained their confidence, but they spoke very freely before me. I listened to them with pleasure while studying them attentively, for they were in no way alike. Kor was a positive, practical man, with the head of an administrator, a rationalist; Kalinitch, on the contrary, was a kind of idealist, a romanticist, a dreamer and an enthusiast. Kor had grasped the positive side of life; he had made a home, he had picked up a little capital, he was on good terms with his master and other powers: Kalinitch wore *lapti* and lived as well as he could. Kor had brought into the world a numerous family, submissive and united: Kalinitch had formerly had a wife whom he feared, and never had had children. Kor knew *Poloutikine* thoroughly: Kalinitch adored his master. Kor loved and protected Kalinitch, by whom he was loved and respected in turn. Kor was taciturn, chuckled, and let nothing escape him: Kalinitch brightened up while speaking,

though he had not that fluency of speech that distinguishes some peasants. But he had also merits that Kor himself recognized; as, for example, he cured fits, visions, and madness; he was fortunate with his bees; he had a *lucky hand*. Kor begged him before me to make a horse that he had just bought go into his stable, and Kalinitch fulfilled with a conscientious importance the request of the old sceptic. Kalinitch was nearer nature; and Kor, men and society. Kalinitch did not like to reason, and believed everything blindly: now and then Kor went so far as to contemplate life in an ironical point of view. He had seen a great deal, knew a great deal, and had acquired a great deal of experience. He told me of a number of things; for example, he told me that every year, when haying begins, a little *téléga* of a peculiar shape appears in the villages, in which is seated a man selling scythes. He sells scythes at a rouble and a quarter, and on trust at three and five roubles. Naturally all the peasants buy on credit. At the end of two or three weeks he comes back and asks for his money; the peasant has cut his oats, and consequently he has something with which to pay; he takes the merchant to the tavern, and there settles it with him. Some proprietors had an idea of buying scythes themselves, cash down, and giving them at the same price, on credit, to the peasants; but the peasants were very discontented and even disturbed at this; for they were deprived of the pleasure of tapping the scythe, listening to the noise that it gave out, turning it around between their hands and repeating more than twenty times to the scamp of a city merchant who offered it to them, "But, you know, my dear fellow, that the scythe is hardly—you understand me." The same scenes were gone through with at the buying of the sickles, with this difference, that the peasant-women meddled and often forced the merchant himself to beat them to bring them to reason. But the peasant-women undergo especially bad treatment under the following circumstances: The suppliers of rags for paper-mills entrust the care of buying these materials to particular men, who in some districts bear the name of "eagle." Individuals of this description receive two hundred roubles from their patron and start out on the campaign. But, contrary to the habits of the noble bird whose name they bear, they do not act openly and boldly; they use artifice and cunning to achieve their ends. When one of them approaches a village, he generally leaves his *téléga* at a little distance from the first isbas, in the bushes, and he him-

self advances from behind, skirting along the farm-yard: you would think that it was an ordinary peasant or an idle man walking about. The peasant-women scent him in some way or other as he passes, and go out to meet him. The sales are concluded secretly and in haste. A peasant-woman thus gives up to the eagle for a few kopeks not only all the useless rags in the house, but often even her husband's shirt and her own skirt. In these later times they have thought proper to rob even themselves, and so sell hemp and especially tow, which has considerably extended the eagle's business. But the peasants, on their side, have acquired experience, and at the least suspicion, at the least report of an eagle's appearance in the country, they immediately have recourse to preventive corrections. That is only justice: certainly the sale of the tow belongs to them. It is they who sell it; not in the town,—they would have to take it there,—but to those merchants who come expressly for that purpose, and who, having no scales, count forty handfuls to a *poud*: and you have no idea what a Russian handful amounts to, especially when it is a large one.

As I had lived but little in the country, I listened with great interest to other details on this subject from my new friend. But he did not confine himself to that; he also in his turn put a number of questions to me. On learning that I had been abroad, his curiosity was aroused, and Kalinitch was not behind in this respect. But what impressed Kalinitch most were the descriptions of nature, mountains, cascades, remarkable monuments, great towns; Kor was especially interested in questions of government and administration, and he proceeded regularly in his interrogations. "Have they this there, as we have, or not?" he would say; "come, father, tell me that." "Ah! Lord, thy will be done!" Kalinitch would exclaim during my stories. Kor was silent; he frowned and simply said, from time to time, "That would not do for us. It is well. That's a matter of course." I could not tell you all his questions; and besides they would give you very little information. But I drew from them the following conclusion, a conclusion you would certainly not expect; it was that Peter the Great was thoroughly Russian, above all in the reforms that he made. The Russian has such a confidence in his own strength that he is ready to do violence to all his habits. He cares little for his past, and looks boldly forward. That which is good pleases him; that which is reasonable he must have at any

price, little matter whence it comes. With the good sense that distinguishes him, he readily laughs at the dry reasoning of the Germans. But Kor, however, admitted that "the Germans were a somewhat curious people," and was ready to give them credit for all they deserved. Thanks to his exceptional position, to his independence in fact, Kor spoke of many things that you could not have drawn from another at any price, or, as the peasants say, "even by crushing him under a millstone, or forcing him to it with a lever." He understood his position very well. In talking with him, I appreciated for the first time the sensible, simple talk of the Russian peasant. The knowledge that Kor had acquired was rather extensive for his condition; and yet he was illiterate. Kalinitch could read. "It came to him, the queer fellow," Kor said to me; "but he is lucky: his bees have never frozen in winter."

"And have you taught your children to read?" I asked Kor.

"Éédia can read," he answered me after a moment's silence.

"And the others?"

"The others,—no."

"Why so?"

The old man did not answer and changed the conversation.

Yet, however sensible he was, he shared in a great number of superstitions and popular prejudices. He had the greatest contempt for women, and did not spare them when he was in a good humor. His wife, who was an old scold, lay on the stove and did nothing but growl and heap abuse on those about her; her sons paid no attention to her, but she kept her daughters-in-law in the fear of God. It is not in vain that a mother has said in a Russian song, "What kind of a son are you to me? What kind of a head of a family will you be when you are old? You do not beat your wife; you do not strike her." I once attempted to intercede for these unfortunates, and to awake Kor's feeling in respect to them. But he answered me quietly, "What an idea, for you to trouble yourself with such fools! Let the women quarrel; you will gain nothing in attempting to reconcile them; besides, it is not worth the trouble of soiling your hands."

Sometimes the bad old woman would come down from the stove, call from the vestibule to a dog that was in the

yard, saying, "Here, here, little dog!" and when he ran to her, she would strike him on his thin flanks with a poker, or else she would go out under the penthouse and begin "to snarl," as Kor said, at all the passers-by. Yet she feared her husband, and went back to the stove when the old man ordered her to do so. But above all it was very curious to hear the discussions of Kor and Kalinitch when they spoke of Poloutikine.

"Don't dare," said Kalinitch, "to speak badly of him."

"Why doesn't he buy you boots?" Kor answered.

"Oh, bah! boots! What do I want with boots? I am a peasant."

"But I am also a peasant, and yet—" And while saying this, Kor raised his foot and showed Kalinitch a boot that seemed cut out of the skin of a mammoth.¹

"You? But then are you one of us?" answered Kalinitch.

"Well, at least he ought to give you something to buy lapti. You go shooting with him, and each time you must use up a pair."

"He pays me for lapti."

"Yes, last year he was pleased to give you six kopeks."

Kalinitch turned away with rage. Kor was dying with laughter, and his little eyes had entirely disappeared.

Kalinitch sang rather well and played on the *balalaika*.² Kor listened to him, listened, then suddenly he bent his head and began to accompany him with a plaintive voice. He especially liked the song that began with these words: "Oh, my lot! my sad lot!" Fédia never missed the occasion, and joked his father. "Who is that," he said, "complaining in that way?" But Kor rested his cheek on his hand, shut his eyes, and continued to bewail his lot. But in other circumstances there was no more active man than he. He was always busy; now in mending a *téléga* or raising a hedge, now examining the harnesses. Yet he was not over-neat, and answered my remarks on this point by saying "that an *isba* should smell as though one lived in it."

"Just see how clean Kalinitch keeps his house in the woods."

"The bees would not live there otherwise, father," he said to me with a sigh.

1. Fossil elephants that are found in great abundance, above all, in Siberia in the most shallow lands.

2. Kind of primitive guitar.

"But," he asked me another time, "have you an estate of your own?"

"Yes."

"Is it far from here?"

"About a hundred verstes."

"And you live, father, on your estates?"

"Yes."

"You do a great deal of shooting?"

"Yes, I admit it."

"That's well, father; you do well. Shoot for your health, kill as many grouse as you can, and often change your Starosta."

The fourth day Poloutikine sent after me. I left the old man with regret, and got into my téléga with Kalinitch.

"Then farewell, Kor," I said as I left; "farewell, Fédia."

"Farewell, little father, farewell; do not forget us."

We started off; it was not quite twilight. "It will be magnificent weather to-morrow," I observed, looking at the serene sky.

"No, it will rain," answered Kalinitch; "here are the ducks paddling about, the odor of the grass is strong."

We went into the bushes. Kalinitch began to sing while bouncing about on his seat; he never stopped looking at the setting sun.

The next day I left Poloutikine's hospitable roof.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SINGERS.

THE little village of Kolotovka formerly belonged to a proprietress whose family name is now forgotten, but who was generally called in the country about *la Tondeuse*, on account of the enterprising and avaricious spirit that distinguished her. To-day it is the property of a German from Petersburg. The position of this town is remarkable; it is on the top of a barren hill, and an enormous ravine, the sides of which are washed by the spring floods, divides the principal street. This yawning abyss cuts off all communication between the wretched cottages that line it on both sides. A river would be much less inconvenient; it would at least be bridged. Some thin clumps of willows grow here and there on the sandy banks of the ravine, and seem to be clinging on them; at the bottom of this precipice there are enormous blocks of argillaceous rock that stand out in relief on the dried-up yellow soil. The appearance of Kolotovka is, as you see, not very attractive, and yet the road that leads to this melancholy place is well known to all the peasants about, who are fond of going there often.

At the neck of the ravine, a few steps from the point where it still forms but a narrow crevice, stands a little isba; it is by itself, entirely isolated from the village. Its thatched roof is overtopped by a chimney; there is but one window on the side towards the ravine, and during the long winter evenings, when it is lighted up, it looks like a piercing eye: it can be seen very far away, shining through the white mist caused by the heavy frosts, and then the peasants use it as a star to direct them on their way during the night. A little board painted blue is above the door of this isba, which is nothing more than a tavern,—to which in the country they give the name of *pritynni*.¹ Though brandy is probably not sold here at the low price that it is elsewhere,

1. They thus designate all places where they go for pleasure.

it is more patronized than all the establishments of the kind in the country, and this is due to the tavern-keeper, Nikolai Ivanovitch, who keeps the brandy for sale.

Nikolai Ivanovitch was once a vigorous youth with full red cheeks. Now he is a man enormously stout, his fine head of hair has become white, his brow is covered with wrinkles that cross each other in every direction, his features are disfigured by fat, and his eyes have an expression of kindness mixed with shrewdness. He has lived at Kolotovka for twenty years at least. Like most innkeepers, Nikolai Ivanovitch is a shrewd and very cautious man; he has the talent of attracting and keeping his customers without taking much trouble to make himself agreeable. They like to sit before the bar, where the impassive innkeeper generally takes up his position to watch them with a complacent but scrutinizing manner as they are seated about the room. No one knows better than he the state of the seigneurs' affairs, as well as those of the peasants and farmers. Good sense being one of the characteristic traits of his mind, he can if necessary give excellent advice; but a fund of egotism, joined to the reserve that never leaves him, makes him hold his tongue, and when he thinks fit to give the benefit of his advice to any one, he does it in an absent-minded sort of way as if it were not of much importance: yet he gives this help only to those of his customers whom he esteems particularly. He knows thoroughly all that can be of any use to a Russian—horses, cattle, woods, bricks, pottery, calicoes, hides, songs and dances. When he has no customers, he generally squats down on the ground before the door of his house, his thin legs curled up under his enormous body; and if any one chances to pass, he never fails to speak a few words to them in an affable way. Since he has been settled at Kolotovka he has seen many things, and turned them to account. How many are left of those little proprietors who once came to buy pure brandy of him? Most of them are under the sod long since, and he is still of this world. Also, what does he not know? He can teach the stanavoi himself. But I repeat it, he knows the value of silence, and generally contents himself with chuckling while moving about his glasses. All the people about show him great respect: Chterepetenko, a general on the civil list, the seigneur of the highest rank of the district, never passes by his little house without saluting him in a kindly way. Nikolai exercises a kind of authority in the

country: he has been known to compel a horse-thief to restore an animal that the scamp had taken out of the yard of one of his friends; he has brought to their senses the inhabitants of a neighboring village who would not obey a new steward, etc. Yet he would not do this from a spirit of justice or for a laudable interest in his neighbor. He assumes the rôle of peace-maker from a much less exalted feeling; as nothing is more precious to him than his repose, he allows nothing to disturb it. Nikolai Ivanovitch is married and has children. His wife was, in her youth, a busybody with a sharp nose and a wide-awake look; but, like her husband, she has become somewhat stout with years. Nikolai Ivanovitch has the greatest confidence in her, and it is she who keeps all the keys of the house. Drunken brawlers fear her; she does not like them, for they generally make a good deal of noise and spend little money; she prefers taciturn, surly drinkers for her customers. Nikolai Ivanovitch's children are yet very young. There were several who died young; those who are left do honor to their parents; they glow with health, and their cunning little tricks are amusing to see.

I was going along one day with my dog by the ravine of which I have just spoken; it was in July, and I walked slowly, for the heat was stifling. The sun, then just overhead, shot forth its rays with redoubled force; a choking dust hovered in the air. Crows and ravens with glossy plumage looked piteously at the passers-by, with half-open beak, and seemed to implore their compassion. The sparrows alone had lost none of their usual gayety; they even fluttered with more life than ever among the hedges, and chased each other crying out, their feathers all standing up; they alighted in swarms in the middle of the dusty road, and passed like gray clouds above the green hemp-fields. I was dying of thirst; there was no water about. The inhabitants of Kolotovka have no wells; they are satisfied, like those of many other villages, with the liquid mud from a neighboring pond. This vile liquid inspired in me the most profound disgust. I resolved to go and ask Nikolai Ivanovitch for a glass of beer or kvass.

The appearance of the village of Kolotovka, which is never very agreeable, as I have already said, is especially unattractive at this season. The dazzling glare of the sun brings out the smallest details of this melancholy landscape: the half-ruined thatched roofs; the deep ravine; the little burnt-up

place that tells of heat, in the middle of which are straying a few thin chickens, this ruin of worm-eaten aspen-wood, with yawning windows, is all that is left of the seignorial house, now lost in a crowd of nettles and wormwood; the pond with its black surface covered with geese-feathers, bordered on one side by a circle of half-dried mud, and on the other by a ruined dam, beyond which, on the gray trodden-down bank, is a flock of gasping sheep, who, huddled up together, with their heads down, seem resigned to await patiently the end of the torture that they are suffering. I walked slowly towards Nikolai Ivanovitch's house. The village children gazed at me, as they usually do, with an expression of surprise that seemed now and then to border on amazement, and the dogs with an anger that showed itself by such furious barking that they lost their breath and began to cough. A tall peasant appeared suddenly on the door-sill of the tavern. He was bare-headed, and his frieze cloak was held by a blue belt that went round him just above his hips. This costume denoted a *dvorovi*. His face was thin, and his forehead, covered with wrinkles, was surmounted by thick hair already gray. He called some one, and seemed unable to control the movements of his hands in gesticulating—a sure sign of the numerous libations in which he had already indulged.

"Come!" he cried out in a hoarse voice, raising his thick eyebrows with an effort—"Come, Morgatch, come! Indeed one would think you were hardly moving. That is not right, brother; they are waiting for you, and you crawl. Come!"

"I am coming; here I am, here I am!" called a shrill voice; and a little fat, lame old man appeared on the right of the *isba*. He wore a long and rather clean cloth tunic, with but one arm through the sleeves; a high pointed cap, that came down very low on his forehead, gave to his round face an expression of malicious glee. His little yellow eyes were always rolling about, a constrained smile passed perpetually over his lips, and his long thin nose stood out like a rudder.

"I am coming, my dear," he added, advancing with an uncertain step towards the tavern. "Why do you call me? What do they want?"

"Why do I call you?" cried the man in the frieze cloak in a reproachful tone. "Ah! Morgatch, you are indeed a queer fellow, brother; they are asking for you at the tavern, and

you ask what they want! There are honest people there waiting for you: Iachka the Turk, and Diki-Barine,¹ and the contractor of Jizdra. Iachka and the contractor have made a wager. They have wagered a measure of beer, and we are to judge who is the better singer. Do you understand?"

"Iachka is going to sing?" suddenly said the person whom our drunkard had called Morgatch. "Truly? Obaldouf, do you tell me this to get me to go?"

"I am not lying," answered Obaldouf with dignity, "and you are talking nonsense. Of course he will sing; it is a question of a wager, you foolish little person, you ninny, Morgatch."

"Then come along, my good man," replied Morgatch.

"Come, embrace me, my darling," Obaldouf said in a drunken voice; "it is the least you can do," and he opened his arms.

"Ah, you tender Æsop!" answered Morgatch scornfully, pushing him by the elbow, and both, stooping down a little, crossed the threshold of the tavern.

This conversation strongly aroused my curiosity. I had already heard of Iachka the Turk. He was considered the most skilful singer of the country, and I could not resist the desire of hearing him contend with another master of his kind. That is why I hurried and went into the house.

Probably most of my readers have never put foot in the village tavern. But we, sportsmen, what places are we not familiar with? The interior arrangements of these establishments are very simple. They generally consist of a little dark anteroom, and of a room that is divided in two by a partition, behind which a customer is forbidden to go. In this partition there is a large opening, before which is an oaken table. It is at this kind of a bar that the tavern-keeper sells his wares. Opposite the partition are some shelves on which are ranged sealed *chtofs*.² The part of the isba intended for the drinkers is furnished with two or three empty casks, several benches, and a table placed in the corner. Village taverns are generally rather dark, and it is very rare to see the coarsely-colored pictures that usually decorate peasants' houses nailed upon the wall.

When I went into the inn, rather a numerous company had already assembled there. Nikolai Ivanovitch was, as usual, before the bar. He cut off the greater part of the

1. The Wild Master.

2. The ordinary little-necked bottles in which they sell brandy.

light of the opening of which I have just spoken. He wore a very large shirt of colored calico. He was idly pouring out with his white pudgy hand, and with that smile that never left his swollen face, two glasses of brandy for Morgatch and his friend Obaldouf. A little farther on, near the window, shone the piercing eyes of his wife. In the middle of the room was Iachka the Turk. He was a spare but well-shaped man, who would pass for about five-and-twenty. He was dressed in a long blue cotton-cloth tunic. From his resolute bearing it was easy to see that he belonged to the working-class. Though he did not seem to be in good health, his hollow cheeks, his gray restless eyes, his straight nose, his thin, quivering nostrils, his white retreating forehead, his light hair brushed back, his thick but expressive lips,—in a word, all his features denoted a man of sensitive and passionate disposition. He seemed to be greatly excited; his breathing was unequal, he blinked, and his hands trembled as though he had an attack of fever. One might indeed give that name to the condition in which he was. He felt the unconquerable emotion that suddenly takes possession of the most resolute person when they are about to speak or sing in public. Near him was a man of forty, who had broad shoulders, prominent cheek-bones, and a low brow; long slanting eyes like the Tartars, a short flat nose, a square chin, and black hair, glossy and stiff as pigs' bristles. The expression of his face, with its leaden tinge and pale lips, would have passed for cruel if it had not been sweetened by its calm thought. He was nearly motionless, and was looking slowly about him, like a bull under a yoke. The coat with large metallic buttons that he wore was threadbare, and an old black silk neck-cloth was about his neck. This person was the one whom Obaldouf had called Diki-Barine. Opposite him, seated on the bench, near the images, was Iachka's rival, the contractor of Jizdra. He was a robust peasant of about five-and-thirty. He was not very tall; his face was marked with the small-pox, his hair was woolly, and his nose large and turned up. His bright brown eyes were full of vivacity, and his beard was not very long. He had a resolute air, and while seated with his hands passed under his thighs he swung his legs and tapped the floor with his feet, adorned with a fine pair of top-boots. He wore a fine gray cloth *armiak* with a black velvet collar over a red shirt fastened at the neck. At a table in the corner opposite, at the right of the door, was a peasant whose old smock-

frock had an enormous tear on the shoulder. Two little windows with dusty blinds let into this retreat a few rays of sunlight, but these beams of yellowish light were soon lost in the midst of the obscurity that usually reigned in this dark abode. They barely gave light enough to bring out the objects they encountered. This inconvenience was made up for by the freshness of the place. On coming in I felt the stifling weight of the heat, that I had endured so painfully since morning, vanish as if by enchantment.

My arrival at first seemed to disturb Nikolai Ivanovitch's guests, but when they saw that he greeted me as he would one of his acquaintances they were reassured, and finally paid no attention to me. I asked for beer, and sat down in the corner, near the peasant with the old smock-frock.

"Well," cried Obaldouf suddenly, after emptying at a draught the glass of brandy that the innkeeper had given him, and following this exclamation by those strange gestures without which he never seemed able to speak a word, "what are they waiting for? They should begin, begin. What do you say to it, Iachka?"

"Begin, begin," said Nikolai Ivanovitch in an approving tone.

"We will begin. I am ready," answered the contractor coldly, and he smiled with confidence. "I am ready."

"And I also," said Iachka nervously.

"Come, begin, my children, begin!" exclaimed Morgatch in a shrill voice.

But instead of gratifying the general desire, the singers were still silent. The contractor had not even left his place. They still seemed to be expecting something.

"Begin!" said Diki-Barine, in a brisk, imperious tone.

Iachka trembled. The contractor arose, readjusted his belt, and coughed to clear his voice.

"Who will sing first?" he asked in a somewhat troubled voice to Diki-Barine, who still stood motionless in the middle of the room, his legs spread apart and his hands buried up to the elbows in his trouser-pockets.

"You, you, the contractor!" cried Obaldouf; "you, brother."

Diki-Barine looked at him askance. Obaldouf uttered a few inarticulate words, became confused, raised his head to the ceiling, shrugged his shoulders, and was silent.

"Draw lots," said Diki-Barine slowly, "and put the quart of beer on the table!"

Nicolaï Ivanovitch stooped down, and took up the measure at his feet and placed it on the table. Diki-Barine raised his eyes to Iachka and said to him, "Well!"

The young man began to fumble in his pockets, drew out a kopek and bit it. The contractor raised the skirt of his kaftan, took out a new leather purse, slowly undid the strings, and turned out quite a large quantity of money on the palm of his hand, choosing the kopek that had the finest appearance. Obaldouï stretched out his dirty cap; Iachka threw a kopek into it, and the contractor did likewise.

"You draw," said Diki-Barine, addressing Morgatch.

Morgatch smiled, took his hat in his hands, and began to shake it with an important air.

The deepest silence prevailed in the room; one only heard the dull sound of the kopeks rattling against each other in the cap. I looked about me. All the faces expressed the liveliest curiosity. Diki-Barine seemed restless, and even my neighbor, the peasant in the ragged smock-frock, was craning his neck. Morgatch put his hand in his cap and drew out the contractor's kopek. All the company gave a sigh of relief; Iakof blushed, and the contractor passed his hand through his hair.

"I said it was you," exclaimed Obaldouï; "yes, I said so."

"Come, come, don't scold," replied Diki-Barine scornfully. "Begin," he added, nodding his head to the contractor.

"What song shall I sing you?" he said with emotion.

"Whatever you like," answered Morgatch. "Choose; we will listen."

"Of course we will," said Nikolaï Ivanovitch, slowly crossing his arms. "We have no order to give you. Sing whatever you like; only do your best. We will judge conscientiously."

"Yes, certainly, conscientiously," replied Obaldouï; and he began to lick the rim of his empty glass.

"Wait, brothers, let me clear my voice a little," said the contractor, rubbing the black collar of his kaftan.

"Come, come, don't make such a fuss," answered Diki-Barine in a tone of authority, and he bent down his head.

The contractor kept silence for a few minutes; then shook his head and made a step forward. Iakof rested his eyes on him.

But before beginning to tell of the contest that was about to take place between the two singers, I do not think it out of the way to give you a little information about the differ-

ent persons whom I have just brought before you. Several of them were already known to me before I met them in this tavern. I gathered a few details about the others after this glimpse of them.

We will begin with Obaldouf. His true name was Egraf Ivanof; but he was known throughout all the district under that of Obaldouf,¹ and he so called himself with reason: this name suited him wonderfully well; it was entirely in accord with his insignificant and troubled face. He was a thorough scamp of the *dvorovi* class; his master had freed him a long time ago, and being without work and receiving no wages, he yet found a means to lead a merry life at the expense of others. He had a crowd of acquaintances who treated him to tea and brandy; it would be very difficult to explain this generosity, for Obaldouf was not very agreeable company; he was even unendurable from his chatter, his indiscreet familiarity, the feeble moving of all his limbs, and the spasmodic laugh that was peculiar to him. He knew neither how to sing nor dance; a sensible word never left his mouth; he confused and distorted everything that he related; in a word, he deserved in every respect the surname of Obaldouf that had been given him. Yet, I repeat it, he was at all the merry-makings within forty verstes around; they were accustomed to see his long face, and every one endured it as an inevitable evil. It is true that he was treated with scorn; but Diki-Barine was the only one who could bring him to his senses.

Morgatch resembled Obaldouf in nothing. Though he did not wink his eyes more than any one else, the name of Morgatch² that had been given him was well chosen; the Russian people generally show much sagacity in the choice of nicknames. In spite of all the researches that I had made to gather some detailed information about this man's past, it was impossible to throw light on certain parts, and I have every reason to believe that most of the inhabitants of the country knew no more about him than I did. I succeeded in finding out that he had once been a coachman in the house of an old proprietress without any family, and that he had run away with a team that had been entrusted to him. But he doubtless found out that a wandering life is not without its inconveniences, for at the end of a year he came back

1. This word is derived from the verb *ballate*, which means to chatter, to talk nonsense.

2. Winker.

quite lame and threw himself at his mistress's feet. Several years of exemplary conduct caused his fault to be forgotten; he was finally even taken back into the good graces of his old mistress, who placed the greatest confidence in him and did not think him unfit to fulfil the duties of steward. After his mistress's death he found himself the possessor, one knew not by what right, of an act of liberation in due form; he was inscribed in the class of bourgeois, engaged in business, and was now an independent person. He was a man of large experience, and was neither good nor bad, but acted from calculation; he was an old fox, and knew men and how to make use of them. He joined prudence to boldness, and was as much of a gossip as an old woman; he never betrayed himself, and knew thoroughly the art of making his neighbor talk; yet he did not affect simplicity, like a great many other men of this description, and perhaps it would have been impossible for him to have done so: his shrewd piercing look would not have lent itself to this. His eyes never appeared to be looking straight ahead; they seemed constantly to be taking in everything that was going on. Morgatch sometimes passed entire weeks in thinking over a very ordinary enterprise, and often, on the contrary, he decided without the slightest reflection on one of the most hazardous steps. One imagined that he was about to run to destruction; but, much to one's surprise, he attained his ends without the least difficulty. He was lucky, and relied on his luck in everything; but he was very superstitious and believed in omens. He was not liked in the country, and he did not try to make any friends there, yet he was generally respected. His whole family consisted of one son whom he worshipped, and this wretched creature, brought up as he was by such a father, is probably called to a brilliant career. "He is like his father in everything," already was said by the old men in a low voice, as they spoke of him, when talking among themselves, seated on their little benches, during the long summer evenings: and that was sufficient; each of them knew the import of these words.

As to Iakof the Turk, and the contractor, there is no need of my expatiating about them. The first was nicknamed the Turk because his mother was a woman of that nation who had been brought a prisoner to Russia. He was, in every acceptance of the word, an artist; but nevertheless he was a workman in a paper-mill, the proprietor of which was a merchant. The contractor must have been, as far as I

could judge, a bourgeois; he had the quick, decided tone that is often noticed among men of that class. We will pass on to the portrait of Diki-Barine, which we must study with more care.

When one saw him for the first time, one was struck by the character of brute strength that was spread over his whole person. Though ill-shapen, he glowed with health; and what is not the less strange, this man, who was somewhat of a bear, was not wanting in charm; it arose perhaps from a feeling of unchanging calmness that the consciousness of his strength inspired in him. At first sight it was difficult to describe the station in life of this Hercules; he could not belong to the class of *dvorovi*, nor could he be a bourgeois nor a retired scribe; it was impossible to rank him among the little ruined proprietors, or huntsmen out of work, that roved about the country; he was indeed a being of a very peculiar kind. One fine morning he appeared in the district, and no one knew whence he came; they said indeed, it is true, that he was an *odnodvoretz* retired from service, but they knew nothing positive in regard to this. How was one to find out? One could not assuredly go to him; he was the most gloomy and taciturn of men. Nor could any one make out how he lived; he practised no profession and associated with none of the inhabitants of the country. Yet he had money, or it is better to say he was never in want of it. As to his conduct, it was not indeed entirely exemplary; moderation was not his strong point, but he did not make himself talked about. One would have thought that he took no heed of the people about him, and he never asked the slightest service of them. Yet Diki-Barine (his real name was *Pérévlesof*) had great influence in the district; his advice was taken willingly and without hesitation, and far from appearing to exact this, he in fact made no pretensions to it. But his opinion was law: strength has an irresistible empire. He drank but little brandy, lived a chaste life, and was passionately fond of singing. This strange man was, in a word, an enigma; he seemed to shut up in his breast a mysterious force that he kept there dozing in a fierce repose, because a secret presentiment warned him that once set loose it would destroy everything in its path, including him who concealed it: and I am much mistaken if Diki-Barine had not already had these wild outbursts in his life; and if to-day he appeared calm and impassive, it was because, taught by experience of the dangers which he

had escaped, he kept a perfect control over himself. Finally, I must not forget a trait that had especially struck me: he joined to a natural cruelty a great delicacy of feeling. I have never chanced since to come across such a contrast.

I will resume my story, which I interrupted just as the contractor had advanced into the middle of the room. He shut his eyes a little, and began to sing in a falsetto voice which was rather pleasant, though not very pure. He played with it at will, and passed alternately from the highest notes to the lowest; but he preferred to linger on the first, which he forced himself to hold with an astonishing flexibility of the throat. Now and then he broke off abruptly, and suddenly resumed with an overpowering zeal. His modulations were very bold, and sometimes he changed his tone in a very original way; a lover of music would have listened with pleasure, and a German could not have endured it. He was a light tenor, a *tenore di grazia* in a Russian kaffan. He gave so many flourishings to the words of the song that he had chosen, that I had a great deal of trouble in catching a few of them, and among others these:

"A little patch of land, love,
I'll plough for you;
And red flowrets with lavish hand, love,
Here sow for you."

The audience listened very attentively. He was not unconscious of the fact that he had to do with intelligent people, and that is why he tried to display all his skill. Singing was well understood in our province, and the village of Sergievsk, on the border of the Orel highway, is renowned through all the Empire for the merits of its singers. The contractor exerted himself for a long time before touching his audience; he was not encouraged by the company; but suddenly the skill with which the singer had just changed the tone brought a smile of satisfaction to Diki-Barine's face, and Obaldouï could not restrain a cry of admiration. This feeling came over all the other peasants; they began to show from time to time marks of approval in a low voice. "Good! still higher, young man!" "Come, courage, you rogue!" "Come, now, you dog! warm up or may Herodias destroy your soul!" etc. Nikolaï Ivanovitch, sitting on the bar, swayed his head to and fro as a sign of satisfaction. Obaldouï beat time with his feet and moved

his shoulders. As to Iakof, his eyes shone like burning coals; he trembled all over like a leaf, and an uneasy smile played about his lips. Diki-Barine was the only one whose face was impassible; and he still kept quiet. Yet his eyes, resting on the contractor, were a little less hard, though his mouth expressed scorn as usual. Urged on by these signs of encouragement, the contractor began to sing with great skill, and to pour forth such brilliant sounds that when, completely exhausted by his efforts, with his face pale and covered with perspiration, he threw his body back and gave out with effort a last note, the whole audience responded to it with frantic exclamations. Obaldouf threw himself on the singer's neck and embraced him with such force with his long bony arms that he nearly choked him; Nikolaï Ivanovitch's fat face was covered with a youthful blush, and Iakof cried out like a madman, "Ah! the lad! how he has sung to us!" My neighbor, the peasant in the smock-frock, struck the table with his fist, saying, "Ah! that's good! may the devil take me, that is indeed good!" and he spat on the ground with a confident air.

"Ah, brother, you have given us pleasure!" exclaimed Obaldouf, without letting go his hold of the quite exhausted contractor. "Yes, indeed you have given us pleasure. You have won, brother, you have won! I congratulate you; the beer belongs to you. Iachka has not your power. Yes, I say it; you can believe me." And he again pressed the contractor to his bosom.

"Let him go, you madman!" said Morgatch to him with rage. "Let him go and sit on the bench; can't you see he is tired out? What a blockhead you are! yes, indeed. You stick to him like a wet leaf."

"Well, then, let him sit down; I will go and drink to his health," answered Obaldouf; and he went towards the bar. "At your expense, brother," he added, addressing the contractor.

The contractor gave a gesture of assent, sat down on the bench, took a towel out of his cap and wiped his forehead. As to Obaldouf, he swallowed his glass of brandy, then like all inebriates he uttered a hoarse grunt, and an expression of melancholy spread over his features.

"You sing well, brother, very well," said Nikolaï Ivanovitch affably. "It is your turn, Iachka; and above all don't be afraid. We shall see who will win. The contractor indeed sings well."

"Very well," added Nikolai Ivanovitch's wife, and she looked at Iakof smiling.

"Ah, yes! ah!" said my neighbor in a low voice.

"Ah! you *Polekha*¹ blockhead!" exclaimed Obaldouf, suddenly going up to my neighbor, and he began to jump and laugh, pointing at him with his finger. "Polekha! Polekha! ah! *Badi*!² what brought you here?"

The poor peasant became confused, and was about to leave the tavern, when Diki-Barine's loud voice was heard.

"You insufferable beast!" he said, grinding his teeth.

"I am doing nothing," stammered Obaldouf; "yes—it is only—"

"Come! well, be silent!" said Diki-Barine. "Iakof, begin."

"I don't know, brother," said Iakof, carrying his hand to his throat, "yes—hem! I don't know what I feel there, but—"

"Come," replied Diki-Barine, "aren't you ashamed to be afraid? Begin! Sing as well as God will let you." And he resumed the attentive attitude that he had kept while listening to the contractor.

After keeping silence for a few moments, Iakof looked about him and covered his face with his hand. All the audience looked at him, and the contractor's face, that up to this time had only expressed confidence and satisfaction, showed a secret uneasiness. He leaned against the wall, his hands on the bench, as at the beginning of the contest, but no longer swung his legs. When Iakof uncovered his face, it was as pale as death, and his eyes were almost entirely shut. He gave a deep sigh and began. The first sound that he gave out was weak and trembling; one would have thought that it did not come from his chest; it seemed like a distant echo from afar, and it produced a strange impression. All his audience looked at him, and Nikolai Ivanovitch's wife straightened up. The sound that followed was stronger and more prolonged, but it still trembled like the last vibration of a chord tightly strung and touched by a bold hand. It was not long before his voice grew stronger, and he sang a melancholy song—"More than one path leads to the plain." These words produced a general emotion. As for me, I had

1. This name is given to the inhabitants of the woody country that begins at the districts of Bolkhof and Jizdra. They are renowned for their obstinacy.

2. An expression peculiar to these people.

rarely heard a more touching voice; it was, it is true, a little uneven, and I even found in it an unhealthy weakness mingled with tenderness, the effect of which was irresistible. It was indeed a Russian song, and a song that went straight to the heart. Iakof became more and more excited; completely master of himself, he gave himself up entirely to the inspiration that had taken possession of him. His voice no longer trembled; it no longer betrayed anything but the emotion of passion, that emotion that so rapidly communicates itself to the hearers. One evening I was by the sea as the tide was coming in; the murmur of the waves was becoming more and more distinct. I saw a gull motionless on the shore, with its white breast facing the purplish sea; from time to time it spread its enormous wings and seemed to greet both the incoming waves and the disk of the sun. This came to my mind at that moment. Iakof seemed to have completely forgotten his rival and all those about him, but he was encouraged by our silence and the passionate attention that we gave him. He sang, and each of the notes that he uttered had something indescribably national and vast about them, like the horizons of our immense steppes. I began to feel my eyes fill with tears, when suddenly stifled sobs struck my ears. I turned. It was the tavern-keeper's wife who was weeping, with her brow pressed against the window. Iakof looked at her, and from that moment the tone of his voice acquired a strength, a sweetness still more entrancing. Nikolai Ivanovitch bent down his head; Morgatch turned away; Obaldouf stood much affected, with open mouth; the peasant in the smock-frock crouched in the corner, shaking his head and murmuring unintelligible words; Diki-Barine frowned, and a tear found its way down his bronzed cheek; the contractor leaned his forehead on his hand and remained motionless. I do not know how this general emotion would have ended if Iakof had not suddenly stopped in the middle of a high note. It seemed as if his voice had broken. No one said a word; every one kept perfectly still. They seemed to expect that he would go on with his singing; but he opened his eyes and, as if surprised at our silence, looked about the room uneasily. He soon became aware that the victory belonged to him.

"Iachka," said Diki-Barine, resting his hand on his shoulder, and he was silent.

None of us moved. The contractor was the first to rise:

he went up to Iakof. "You—it is you," he said to him with an effort,—“you have won;” and he abruptly left the room.

He had hardly gone when the charm under which we all were was dissipated; we began to talk cheerfully among ourselves. Obaldouf gave a jump, chuckling and moving his arms about like a windmill. Morgatch hobbled up to Iakof and began to embrace him. Nikolaï Ivanovitch arose and announced solemnly that he offered the assembly a second measure. Diki-Barine smiled, and his smile had a sweetness that contrasted strangely with the usual expression of his face. As to my neighbor the peasant, he wiped his eyes, cheeks, and beard with the sleeve of his frock and repeated incessantly in the corner, “It’s fine! Yes, may the devil take me if it is not fine!” Nikolaï Ivanovitch’s wife was crimson; she quickly got up and went out. Iakof enjoyed his triumph like a child. You would not have recognized him; his eyes sparkled with happiness. They drew him up to the bar; he called the peasant with the smock-frock, sent the innkeeper’s child after the contractor, but he could not be found. They began to drink. “You will sing us something more,” repeated Obaldouf incessantly, raising his arms. “You must sing until night.”

I left after giving Iakof a last look. I did not care to stay there any longer, for fear of losing a part of the sweet sensations that I had just felt. But the heat was still intense; it seemed to have inflamed the atmosphere, and to have brought out through a fine blackish dust thousands of little bright points which stood out in relief as they turned round and round in the deep blue of the heavens. Not a sound was heard, and there was something distressing about this silence; nature seemed fallen into a kind of despondency. I came to a shed and stretched myself on a bed of newly cut but already withered grass. It was long before I fell asleep; I could still hear Iakof’s melodious voice. But fatigue and heat finally got the better of me; I fell into a deep sleep. When I awoke it was already night; the falling dew had wet the hay, and it gave out a very sweet odor; some stars shone feebly through the roof of branches under which I was lying. I got up; the last rays of twilight were fading away at the horizon, and yet the heat of the day could still be felt in the midst of the freshness of the night. I still had an oppressive feeling on my chest; I tried to breathe in a breath of air. The weather was calm, and no clouds

sullied the dark but transparent blue of the sky; myriads of stars scarcely visible twinkled feebly on its immense vault. Some fires were burning in the villages; a confused noise, in the midst of which I thought I could make out Iakof's voice, struck my ear; it came from the tavern, the window of which was brightly lighted up. Noisy laughter also arose from time to time. I went up to the window and pressed my forehead against it. An animated but not a pleasant sight met my gaze. All the peasants, including Iakof, were drunk. He, sitting on a bench with his chest bare, was singing in a hoarse voice a kind of rondeau, accompanying himself on a guitar, the strings of which he carelessly touched. His hair, wet with perspiration, fell in disorder about his face, which was frightfully pale. In the middle of the room, Obaldouf, whose legs seemed to be disjointed, was dancing in his shirt-sleeves before the peasant with the gray blouse, who was attempting to imitate him; but his legs began to weaken; he raised his hand now and then with a resolute air and a stupid smile. In spite of all his efforts, he could not raise his heavy eyelids; they fell back instantly over his little drunken eyes. At length he reached the last degree of drunkenness, and was in that happy condition that makes the passers-by say, "You are in a fine state, brother!" Morgatch was red as a crab; his nostrils were dilated, and he was smiling maliciously in a corner. Nikolaf Ivanovitch was the only one who, in his position of inn-keeper, had kept his coolness. There were also a few new persons in the room; but Diki-Barine was no longer there.

I left the window, and rapidly went down the height which the village was on. At the foot of this hill stretched a vast plain; the waves of mist that covered it over were still increasing, and seemed to mingle with the sky. I was walking on in silence, when the shrill voice of a child rose up in the distance. "Antropka! Antropka—a—a!" shouted the child plaintively, losing his breath on the last syllable. Then he stopped, but soon began again. His voice echoed in the middle of the night, which no wind disturbed. He persisted in repeating more than thirty times the name of Antropka without getting any answer. But suddenly he was answered at the end of the plain, and by a voice that seemed to come from another world: "Wha—at—at—at?" The child soon replied, but with a malicious joy, "Come here, you devil, you surly fellow—ow!" "Why—y—y?" he asked after a moment's silence. "Because your father

wishes to give you a thrashing—ing—ing,” replied the child. There was no more answer, and he began to call again, louder than ever; but his cries became less distinct. I turned the corner of the woods that leads to my village, four verstes from Kolotovka. The darkness was intense; the name of Antropka still rose up feebly on the plain.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HAMLET OF THE DISTRICT OF TCHIGRI.

DURING one of my rambles I was asked to dinner by Alexander Mikailovitch, a rich proprietor who was very fond of shooting. His estate was about five verstes from a little village where I was staying. I put on a dress-coat that I brought with me—for it is always well to have a dress-coat with one, even on shooting excursions—and repaired to Alexander Mikailovitch's. Dinner was to be at six. I arrived at five, and found already assembled a number of nobles in full-dress uniform, and many others whose costumes it would be difficult to describe. The master of the house received me very cordially, and then hurried off to the pantry. He was expecting a grand dignitary, and this circumstance threw him into a state of agitation that ill accorded with his fortune and his station in life.

Alexander Mikailovitch was a bachelor and did not care for women's society; he asked only men to his house. His establishment was organized on a grand scale; he had greatly increased it since his father's death, and he laid in annually a stock of wine from Moscow that cost him fifteen thousand roubles. In the country about he was greatly respected. Long since retired from service, he had renounced all honors. How then was it possible to explain the great excitement under which he had labored since the morning of this solemn dinner that was to be honored by the presence of a grand personage? "It is a mystery that one must not dream of solving," as a lawyer of my acquaintance once said when I asked him if he accepted the gratuities that his clients offered him.

Left alone, I passed into the rooms where the guests were assembled. Most of them were entirely unknown to me; twenty or more persons were already seated around the card-tables. Among the latter were two officers with fine but rather worn features, and several men in citizen's dress, with very high cravats and carefully waxed, drooping mustaches

such as are seen only upon men endowed with a resolute character and animated with good intentions. (These well-intentioned men shuffled the cards with dignity, and looked out of the corners of their eyes, without turning their heads, at every one who approached them.) There were also five or six officials of the district with little round paunches, moist fat hands, and heavy feet. (These gentlemen spoke with a soft voice, scattered sweet smiles about them, held their cards against their breasts, and took good care not to thump the table when playing a trump; on the contrary, they played their cards with a certain lightness, and made a genteel little sound with them as they picked up the tricks.) There were a few gentlemen seated about on the sofas; and there were also some grouped near the doors and in the embrasures of the windows. A man of mature years, but who had something feminine in his appearance, was standing alone in a corner; every now and then he would give a little start and would blush, and then to conceal his embarrassment, although no one took the slightest notice of him, he would play with the charms that hung from his watch-chain. Finally, there were several gentlemen in short coats and checked trousers that displayed the art of a Moscow tailor, who were carrying on an animated but rather pointless discussion among themselves. A light-haired young man of about twenty, but already pale and near-sighted, seemed to be very ill at ease; he was dressed from head to foot in black, and, to keep himself in countenance, smiled sarcastically at his neighbors' conversation.

The time was beginning to seem somewhat long, when I was suddenly accosted by a young fellow of the name of Voïnitsine who had not yet completed his studies, and who was living with Alexander Mikailovitch in the capacity of—in fact I do not remember in what capacity he was living with him. He was a good shot and a capital dog-trainer. I had already met him in Moscow; he then belonged to that class of young men who at examinations filled the role of “posts”—that is to say, who never answered any of the professors' questions. They were also called “whisker-wearers.” This is the scene at the examinations. Let us suppose that Voïnitsine is the student to be examined. He has been all the while sitting straight and still on his bench, covered from head to foot with a feverish perspiration, and looking about with a dazed expression. He immediately rises, and buttoning his uniform up to his throat he sidles

towards the examiners' desk. "Please draw a paper," says the professor in an amiable tone. Voïnitsine extends his arm and touches the packet of papers with a trembling hand. "Please take one at random without choosing," adds impatiently an irritable little old man, a professor of another faculty, who has conceived an instantaneous dislike for the unfortunate "whisker-wearer." Voïnitsine obeys, takes one of the papers, shows the number of it, and goes and seats himself near the window until the student who precedes him has finished answering the examiners' questions. Meanwhile Voïnitsine keeps his eyes fixed on his paper, or, if he turns them away, it is only to cast a frightened look about him. At last the examination of the student is completed and he is told, "That will do; return to your seat;" or else, "Very good, very well done;" according to the way he has answered. Voïnitsine is called up; he rises and goes forward with a confident step towards the professors' table. He is told to read his paper; he takes it with both hands and puts it up until it almost touches the end of his nose; he reads it deliberately, and then slowly lowers his hands. "Well, will you please to answer?" says the professor unconcernedly, tipping back, and crossing his arms upon his chest. A sepulchral silence reigns in the hall. "Well?" Voïnitsine is still silent. The little old man from the other faculty again begins to be excited. "Do say something." The unfortunate Voïnitsine still does not open his lips; he seems paralyzed. Those behind him can study at leisure the expression of the back of his head with its close-cropped hair; he stands rigid and motionless. The little old man becomes more and more excited; the eyes are starting out of his head. Decidedly he has become the declared enemy of Voïnitsine. "This is strange behavior," says one of the professors; "you stand there like a mute. Is it impossible for you to answer? You must say something." "Permit me to take another paper," mumbles the poor fellow at last. The professors look at each other. "Well, so be it," answers with a wave of his hand the one who presides at the examination. Voïnitsine takes another paper, again he goes back to the window, again he approaches the table, and again he stands there as silent as death. The little old man is so exasperated that he is ready to devour him. He is finally sent away with a zero for his mark. You may think he is in a hurry to leave the room. There you are mistaken. He returns to his seat and keeps as still as before

until the end of the examination. As he goes out he exclaims, "What a plucking! just my luck!" and for the rest of the day he wanders about the streets of Moscow, from time to time grasping his head with both his hands and cursing the luck that pursues him. But, of course, he never dreams of opening a book, and the same scene is re-enacted at the next examination.

Such is the person who accosted me. We began to talk about Moscow.

"Would you like," he whispered in my ear, "to have me introduce you to the wittiest man of this part of the country?"

"I should be delighted."

Voïnitsine took me up to a small man with mustaches and an enormous head of hair who wore a maroon coat and a colored neck-cloth. His mobile yellow face expressed causticity and wit. A mocking smile played about his lips, and his little black, twinkling eyes shot out from between his uneven lashes the most self-confident glances. Near him stood a dull-witted proprietor who had a delicate, mawkish look and was blind of one eye. He could not contain himself for joy, and would laugh even before his neighbor opened his mouth. Voïnitsine presented me to the waggish little personage, whose name was Peter Petrovitch Loupekine, and we exchanged the ordinary civilities.

"Permit me," said Loupekine suddenly in his shrill voice at the same time taking the mawkish proprietor by the hand, "permit me to present to you my best friend. Come, don't be bashful, Kirila Sélifanitch," he added; "no one is going to bite you. Here he is;" and he pointed to his neighbor, who bowed awkwardly to me. "Here he is. I can answer for him as one of the most honorable of gentlemen. Up to the age of fifty he was perfectly well; but he suddenly took it into his head that he ought to take care of his eyes, and you see the result,—he is blind in one eye. Since then he has applied the same treatment to his peasants with the same success. You can understand that his solicitude for them has made them all the more devoted to him."

"Oh!" said Kirila Sélifanitch, covered with confusion, and he began to laugh.

"Enough of that, my dear friend," continued Loupekine. "Come, now, it is possible that you may be appointed judge, and, in fact, I am persuaded that fate will overtake you, although I don't wish it for you. I am well aware that the

counsellors would do the thinking for you, but you could not avoid delivering their opinions. I suppose that the governor goes into court, and he would not fail to ask why the judge stopped short every minute. He could be told, it is true, that you are apoplectic; but in that case he would probably order you to be bled, and in your situation that would not be at all the thing, would it?"

The mawkish proprietor laughed as if he would die.

"Let him enjoy himself," continued Loupekine, looking waggishly at the shaking sides of Kirila Sélifanitch. "Indeed, why shouldn't he laugh?" he added, turning to me. "He is well and happy; he has no children; his estates are unincumbered; he can doctor his peasants to his heart's content; and his wife is a great fool." (Kirila Sélifanitch turned away, still laughing, and pretended not to hear.) "I laugh too, and yet my wife ran away with a surveyor." (He gave a sneering little chuckle.) "Oh, you didn't know that? Oh yes, she gave me the slip, leaving behind a letter in which she said, 'My dear Peter Petrovitch, forgive me for leaving you; it is love that takes me from you with my darling.' The surveyor, it is true, was a man that it was hard to resist; he didn't cut his nails, and wore tight trousers. But my frankness astonishes you? Well, you know we inhabitants of the Steppe are brutally frank. But let us move back a little and get away from the future judge."

He took my arm under his, and drew me towards a window.

"I pass here for a man of wit," he said, resuming the conversation; "that no doubt surprises you. In reality I am only a soured man who utters freely all that he thinks; that is why I speak so boldly. Besides, why should I mince matters? I haven't the slightest respect for the opinion of my fellow-beings, and ask nothing at their hands. I am ill-natured, and that fact gives me a great advantage; an ill-natured man can always pass for a wit. Besides, you have no idea how ill-nature cools the blood. For instance, just look at our host! What a state he is in to-day! Why all this excitement? He does nothing but look at his watch; he smiles; he is bathed in perspiration; he makes us all fast. You would think he had never seen a grand personage. Now look! there he is rushing out again. I really thought he would fall."

And Loupekine uttered a little exclamation of scorn.

"Unfortunately there are to be no ladies to-day," he re-

sumed with a deep sigh. "We are to have a dinner of bachelors. That deprives me of a great deal of pleasure. There! look!" he exclaimed suddenly. "There is Prince Kozelski coming yonder—that great bearded fellow with yellow gloves. You will at once recognize the fact that he has been abroad—he always keeps you waiting. He is a fool, and as stupid as an ox; yet he scarcely condescends to speak to us little proprietors, and the civilities of our poor wives and daughters gain from him only a patronizing smile. Still he indulges in a pleasantry, although he does not honor us long with his presence. But what subtle and delicate wit! You would think he was cutting a bit of string with a dull knife! He can't endure me: I will go and pay my respects." And Loupekine bustled up to the prince.

"Ah, I see my personal enemy," he resumed, as he came back. "Do you see that large bilious-looking man with hair as stiff as hog's bristles? The one looking about him, and gliding along by the wall like a wolf? I sold him for four hundred roubles a horse that was worth a thousand; and this being without a name has the right to look down upon me. Yet he is so devoid of intelligence—especially in the morning before tea, and in the evening after dinner—that when you say 'Good-day' to him, he replies 'Wha-at?' Ah, here's the general," he continued, "a general in the civil service, a ruined general. He has a daughter of beet-root sugar and a scrofulous manufactory. Pardon me, I made a mistake; but you understand. What! the architect is also one of us? He is a German who wears mustaches and is ignorant of his profession—a strange combination! But then of what use would knowledge be to him? It is enough that he knows how to make the most of his circumstances, and to cram pillars into all the plans he draws for the nobles, who believe that they are the chief 'pillars' of the district."

Loupekine began to laugh, but a sudden movement spread through the ranks of the guests. The master of the house rushed into the ante-room. Some of his parasites and several of the guests followed closely after him. Conversation, that until then had been very noisy, quieted down into a little buzzing that recalled the sound of bees about the hives in spring-time. Two persons only, Loupekine, the audacious wasp, and the stupid drone, Kozelski, did not lower their voices. But the king¹ of the feast soon appeared.

1. This grand personage was probably the governor of the province.

All hearts were opened; deformed bodies straightened up as he passed; the being without a name himself, the proprietor who had bought Loupekine's horse so cheaply, drew in his chin against his chest. The grand personage played his part to perfection; instead of bowing, he threw his head back and strewed his passage with gracious remarks that all began with the letter "a" pronounced with a nasal drawl. He cast a look of indignation at the beard¹ of Prince Kozelski, and extended to the ruined general the forefinger of his left hand. After a few minutes, during which he remarked several times that he was glad that he had arrived in time, the whole assembly turned their steps towards the dining-room, the dignitaries in front.

It is almost superfluous to tell the reader that the grand personage had the place of honor at the table, between the general in the civil service and the marshal of the nobility, a man with a good, open countenance that was in perfect accord with his starched dicky, his enormous waistcoat, and his round snuff-box filled with French snuff. As to the master of the house, need I describe all the pains he took? He bustled about, he talked to the guests, gave a smile as he passed at the back of the grand personage, and, standing in the corner of the room like a schoolboy in disgrace, he swallowed in haste a plate of soup and a few mouthfuls of meat. Finally, it would be tiresome to relate in detail how the butler brought in a fish three feet long with a bouquet in its mouth; how all the servants, in livery and very grave, with solemn voice offered the guests malaga or dry madeira; and how also most of the nobles present, especially those of ripe age, swallowed, as if under compulsion, one glass after the other; and how, as soon as the popping of champagne corks was heard, healths began to be drunk. All these details are of no interest to my readers. But what impressed me most was an anecdote told in the midst of the most profound attention by the grand personage. Some one—I believe it was the ruined general, who was, by the way, familiar with contemporary literature—was speaking in a general manner of the influence that women exerted over all men, and especially over young men. "Yes, yes," said the grand personage eagerly, "that is true; but young men must be kept under strict control, or they will be tempted to fall in love with the first petticoat they meet."

1. Russian noblemen are forbidden to wear beards.

(An almost infantile look of delight spread over the faces of the guests; one of them, indeed, was so overcome that a look of gratitude could be seen in his eyes.) "For," continued the great man, "young men are fools. Take, for example, my son Ivan, who is scarcely twenty years old; the other day he asked my permission to marry. I said to him, 'Idiot, begin by serving.' At that, despair, tears; but with me there is no trifling." (These last words were spoken in a hollow voice that seemed to come from his stomach; then the great man, raising his eyebrows much more than ordinarily, looked majestically at the civilian general at his right, who inclined his head slightly towards his shoulder and winked rapidly with his left eye.) "Now," continued the grand personage, "he writes to me, 'Thank you, father, for having put reason into the head of an idiot like myself.' That is the way to act." This little discourse was, of course, received with the greatest favor, and new life was given to the feast. As soon as dinner was over, the whole company went back into the drawing-room, making, it is true, rather more noise than when they sat down to the table; but it was so subdued that it seemed to be authorized by his Excellency. Every one took his place at the card-tables; and after passing the evening as well as I could in this way, I ordered my coachman to be ready at five o'clock in the morning, and went to the chamber that had been allotted to me. I hardly suspected that I was again to be called upon that same evening to make the acquaintance of a very curious man.

The number of the guests did not permit every one to have a chamber by himself, so I was in no way surprised to see another person undressing in the little damp chamber whither I was shown by the steward of Alexander Mikailovitch. Scarcely had I entered the room when my companion slipped into his bed and pulled the bed-clothes up to his nose. He moved his head on his pillow for a little while; but when he became quiet, I was not slow to remark that from under his huge cotton nightcap his eyes were following all my movements. I went to the other bed, and in my turn got in between the damp sheets that covered it. My companion turned over, and I wished him good-night. At the end of half an hour, I had not succeeded in going to sleep. A crowd of confused ideas presented themselves most inopportunately to my mind, and followed each other with an obstinate monotony and uniformity, like the buckets of a water-wheel.

"I think you are not asleep?" said my neighbor.

"No; as you see. It seems that you have no more desire to sleep than I have?"

"I never care to sleep."

"Why so?"

"It's so; I fall asleep. I don't know why. I go to bed, I fix myself in this way, and I go to sleep."

"Why do you go to bed before you want to go to sleep?"

"What is there to do?"

I did not think it incumbent on me to answer that question.

"I am surprised," he continued after a few moments, "not to feel the fleas. There ought to be some."

"I should think you regretted them."

"No, I don't regret them, but I like consistency in everything."

"Bless me," said I to myself, "how he expresses himself!" My neighbor remained silent.

"Will you make a bet?" he asked suddenly, raising his voice.

"About what?"

My neighbor began to interest me.

"About what? Here is something: I know you take me for an idiot."

"What an idea!" I answered with astonishment.

"For an inhabitant of the Steppe, for a rustic,—confess."

"I haven't the pleasure of knowing you," I replied, "Now could you suppose—?"

"How? The very tone of your voice makes me certain; you reply with a disdainful air. But you are mistaken; I am not what you think—"

"Permit me—"

"Permit me to continue. And in the first place let me tell you that I speak French as well as you do, and German better. Then, I have passed three years abroad; I lived in the city of Berlin alone eight months. I have studied Hegel, my dear sir, and I know Goethe by heart. Indeed, I was a long time in love with the daughter of a German professor; but that did not prevent me from marrying on my return a girl with the consumption. She was bald-headed, but remarkable. You see I amount to something. I am not a savage of the Steppe, as you thought I was. I am, also, absorbed by reflection, and there is nothing silly about me."

I raised my head and began to look at this original being with redoubled surprise. But I found it impossible to make out his features by the feeble rays of the candle that lighted the room.

"Ah! you are looking at me now," he continued, adjusting his cotton nightcap. "And you are probably asking yourself how it was that you did not notice me during the evening. I will tell you. It was because I am not in the habit of speaking loudly; because I hide myself in the crowd; because I keep behind a door without opening my mouth; because the butler when he passes before me with a dish never fails to lift his elbow to the height of my breast. And why is this so? For two reasons: in the first place, I am poor; and in the second place, I am resigned. Confess: you have not noticed me?"

"Truly, I have not had the pleasure of—"

"Oh yes! yes! yes! I knew it."

He sat up and crossed his arms. The shadow that his nightcap cast upon the wall lengthened out until it reached the ceiling.

"Confess, too," he continued, suddenly turning towards me, "that you take me for a frank original, as they say, or something worse. You think, perhaps, that I want to pass myself off as an original?"

"You force me to remind you again that I don't know you."

He leaned his head forward and appeared to reflect. "How is it," he said after a moment or two, "that I have begun to talk in this strain with you, an unknown person? God alone, yes, God alone can tell." He sighed. "It is not apparently by reason of any accord between our souls, for both you and I are men of the world—that is to say, egoists. I cannot be of any use to you, and you can have no interest in knowing me; is it not so? However, sleep avoids us both. Why should we not talk a while?—especially since I am in the mood to talk, something that seldom happens to me. I just told you I was shy. It is true; but it is not because I am a poor provincial without a title, but because I have a great deal of self-esteem. Under favorable circumstances, however,—circumstances that I cannot foresee nor define,—it often happens that I lose completely my natural timidity. That is the case to-day. You could bring me face to face with the Grand Lama himself, and I should not fear to ask him for a pinch of snuff. But perhaps you want to go to sleep?"

"On the contrary," I replied eagerly, "it is very pleasant to talk with you."

"I amuse you: that is what you ought to have said. So much the better. I told you the world was pleased to give me the title of 'original.' Let us understand each other; I receive that title only when among other trifles my name occurs to some one's mind. Further than that no one takes the slightest interest in my fate. They think to wound me; my God, if they only knew! I have become what I am only because I have no originality. None at all—unless I can pretend to it by reason of some sallies that I permit myself to make from time to time, as to-day, for example, with you. But these are not worth two farthings. They show, in fact, originality of the most common kind—of the lowest order."

He turned his head towards me and began to gesticulate.

"My dear sir," he exclaimed after a moment, "in my opinion men that are called originals are superior to all others; they are the only ones that have a right to live. '*Mon verre n'est pas grand, mais je bois dans mon verre,*' some one, I don't know who, has said. See," he added, "how purely I pronounce French. It matters little to me that you have a large head, a great brain, a quick intelligence, that you are up with the world, if you have nothing that is your own—that is peculiar to you and to no one else. There is a depot the more for commonplaces in the world; that is all. No; rather be an idiot, but in your own way. To have one's own odor,—an odor that distinguishes one from all others in the world,—that is the real object to live for. But don't think I am tormented with a desire to have a well-defined odor. Heaven preserve me from it! The world is full of originals; they are everywhere; every man is in truth an original; but as for me, I alone am not an original.

"And yet," he resumed after a short pause, "what hopes I inspired in my youth! What a high idea I had of my merit before I set out upon my foreign travels! and during the first few months after my return! It is true that during my travels I kept my eyes and ears open and held myself prudently aloof, as is the way with us men who think we can divine everything without having learned anything and finish by recognizing the fact that we know nothing.

"An original! an original!" he continued in a reproachful tone, shaking his head, "I called an original! when in fact there does not exist in all the world a man less deserving of

the title than your humble servant. I verily believe I was created and put into the world upon the model of some one else; I assure you it must be so. It seems as if my life were one continual imitation. I copy the writers I have studied; I live by the sweat of my brow. In a word, I have educated myself, I have loved, I have married against my will, as it were, as if to fulfil a duty or to conform to a command, God knows it!"

He pulled off his nightcap and flung it upon the bed.

"Shall I tell you the story of my life," he asked abruptly, "or rather some episodes in my life?"

"Do me that favor."

"Or rather—no, I will first tell you about my marriage. Marriage is one of the most important events in life,—the touchstone of existence! Man is reflected in it as in a mirror. But the comparison is rather hackneyed. I must take a pinch of snuff."

He pulled out his snuff-box from under his pillow, opened it, and began to talk afresh, gesticulating all the while with his snuff-box in his hand.

"You must, my dear sir, enter thoroughly into my position. What profit was there, I ask you—yes, what profit could I get out of Hegel's encyclopædia? Have the kindness to tell me that. What can there be in common between that encyclopædia and the method of life among us Russians? How would you apply to our customs not only that encyclopædia, but German philosophy in general? I may add even—science?"

He started up in his bed, and, grinding his teeth, continued: "Oh, that is the case? Really? Why then did you go to foreign countries? Why did you not stay at home to get some knowledge of what is about you? You would have learned the wants and the future of your country, and at the same time you would have cleared up, as they say, the questions that most nearly affect your own existence. Tell me, now," he continued in an altered tone, as if he had sought to excuse himself with timidity, "how could we know what no savant had ever written in a book? I would have been glad to follow her lessons—the lesson of Russian life; but she is silent, the dear one! 'Understand me,' she says, 'in that way, simply.' But I am not capable of that. I must have a compendium, deductions all made. Really? Deductions? They will be furnished for you, and fine ones. Listen a moment to our Muscovites—they are perfect nightingales.

But there is the difficulty: they sing like perfect nightingales of the Koursk, and don't speak like men. I began to reflect. 'Knowledge,' said I, 'ought to be the same everywhere.' And there I was, by God's help, in a foreign country—in the midst of unbelievers. What could you expect? Youth and pride had turned my head. I did not care to drown myself in fat, as the saying is, before my time, although good people say one is no worse off. However, he to whom nature has vouchsafed no flesh is sure never to have fat on his body.

"But," he added after a moment of reflection, "I believe I promised to tell you about my marriage. Listen, then. But before beginning I must warn you that my wife is no longer of this world, and that I shall be forced to tell you about my early life, for without I did so you would understand nothing. I take it for granted you have no desire to sleep?"

"None at all."

"Good! Listen then carefully, as in the next chamber Kantagrioukine is snoring in a most indecent manner. . . . My parents were not rich. I say 'my parents' because according to tradition my mother had a husband. I don't remember him: he was said to be a very ordinary man with a long nose marked with moles. He had red hair, and took snuff only in one nostril. My mother had his portrait in her chamber: he was represented in a red uniform with a black collar that came up to his ears; nothing could be more ridiculous. I was made to go before this picture to be whipped, and my mother always told me, pointing at it, 'He would not like that.' You may understand how I felt at hearing this. I had neither brothers nor sisters. I had had, if you wish to know it, at one time a bit of a sickly brother whose neck was twisted out of shape by the English malady; but he did not last long. How was it that the English malady had reached the district of Tchigri in the government of Koursk? But that has nothing to do with the present subject. My mother took charge of my education with all the unbridled ardor of a woman of the Steppe. She watched over it from the ever-memorable day of my birth until my sixteenth year. Do you follow the thread of the story?"

"Perfectly; go on."

"Well, when I reached my sixteenth year my mother without further ado sent off my French tutor,—Allemand Fili-povitch, a Greek from Nejine,—took me to Moscow, put my name down at the university, and rendered up her soul to

the Lord, after first confiding me to the tender care of my uncle, the attorney Koltoun Barboura, a bird of prey whose reputation extended far beyond the confines of the district of Tchigri. My uncle the attorney, as was his way, plundered me without mercy; but this again has nothing to do with the subject. I must do my mother the justice to say that I was well prepared for the course at the university; but even then the total want of originality that I reproach myself with had become noticeable in my way of life. My childhood was in nowise different from that of many other children. Weakened by a too rapid growth, I was as sickly as if I had grown up under an eider-down quilt. I began to recite verses that I had learned by heart, and, as is always the case, I was credited with having a natural talent for—i' faith, I don't know what—oh yes, for the *ideal*. I spare you the rest. At the university it was the same. I soon joined a small club¹ of young men. There were then other customs. But perhaps you don't know what I mean by the word 'club'? It was Schiller, I think, that said,

“Man fears the lion's kingly tread,
Man fears the tiger's fangs of terror;
But man himself is most to dread
When mad with social error.”²

No, it wasn't that he intended to say; it wasn't that. He intended to say, 'There is a little club in the town of Moscow.'"³

"Why does a club of friends inspire you with such horror?" I asked.

"Do you ask me that?" he exclaimed. "I will tell you. A club of friends—it is a gulf that swallows up all independence of character. A club of friends takes the place of society; it thrusts women to one side; it brings into contempt all exchange of ideas and sentiments. A club of friends—oh, wait a little and I will tell you what it is. A club of friends is nothing but an easy, idle life that borrows the appearance of a sensible pursuit; in such assemblages conversation takes the place of exercise of the intelligence; a habit of gossip is acquired; solitary work, that is really productive, becomes distasteful; little by little there comes a cursed

1. Koroujok, or club. This name was given to little assemblages of young men who grouped themselves about one of their number. These assemblages had a great deal to do with the literary and scientific movement that took place in Russia from 1835 to 1845.

2. Schiller's "Song of the Bell," Lord Lytton's translation.

3. "Das ist Kroujok in der Stadt Moskau."

literary itch: in a word, all the freshness, all the virginity of the soul is lost. A club of friends—that means insipidity and *ennui* honored with the names of friendship and fraternity, where one voluntarily submits to a multitude of absurd requirements under the pretext of frankness and interest. Every member of one of these assemblages acquires the right to poke his dirty fingers into the most secret recesses of the hearts of his comrades; and, thanks to this fine privilege, the most sacred and delicate sentiments are paraded in the full glare of day. It is in these little coteries that is witnessed the triumph of phrase-mongers—of little sages petrified with self-conceit, of wits tired of the world before their time—and the glorification of verse-makers without talent, but full of dark allusions and thoughts that affect profundity. You find there boys of seventeen discussing women and love; but put them in the presence of a woman and they are silent, or else they talk to her like a book and tell her Heaven knows what. It is in clubs of friends that artificial eloquence flourishes, that men spy upon each other with all the zeal of police detectives. O most fortunate clubs! you are indeed clubs, but clubs that have battered out the brains of many men of real merit!"

"Pardon me the observation," I remarked, "but do you not exaggerate a little?"

My neighbor looked at me a moment without a word.

"It may be so; Heaven only knows! You may be right. But exaggeration is the sole happiness left to us here below. It was so, however, permit me to resume, that I passed four years at Moscow. It would be impossible for me to express to you, my dear sir, the frightful rapidity with which these years slipped away from me; I never refer to them that the remembrance does not excite in me feelings of vexation and sorrow. In the morning I got up and the day passed—quicker than one could slide down a mountain of ice on a sledge; there was scarcely time to turn round when it was night; the servant that came forward to help you with your coat was already asleep. I would dress and call upon a friend, where a cup of weak tea and a pipe awaited me. Conversation would begin and we would discuss German philosophy, love, the eternal light of the intellect, and many other questions not less abstruse. How many times have I not met as elsewhere during one of these visits young men of real originality! In spite of all their efforts they could not bend themselves to the yoke, and nature regained the

mastery. I alone, unfortunate that I am!—I alone kneaded myself with my own hands like a piece of wax without the slightest opposition from my sad nature. However, time had moved on and I had reached my twenty-first year. I entered upon the enjoyment of my fortune—or, to be more exact, upon so much of my paternal heritage as my uncle had condescended to leave me. I put my property into the charge of a freedman named Vassili Koudriachef, and set out for Berlin. I spent three years, as I have had the honor to tell you already, in foreign parts. Well! I found myself there, as here, a being without a spark of originality. In my travels I acquired no knowledge at all of the different countries of Europe; I listened to German professors, and read books written in that language in the place of their publication. That was the only difference. I lived a life as secluded as a monk's. My associates were several retired lieutenants who, like myself, were possessed with the thirst for knowledge, but whose intelligence was rather dull and who were not endowed in the slightest degree with the gift of words. I hung about some Russian families from the Government of Penza and other governments renowned for agriculture; I frequented the cafés; I read the papers; and I went to the theatres. My relations with the inhabitants of the country were very slight; I preserved my habitual reserve in talking with them, and received no one at my lodgings, with the exception of two or three young Israelites whom I could not shake off, and who on the strength of my being a Russian were continually borrowing money of me. But a strange accident took me to the house of one of my professors: I will relate it to you. I called upon him to put my name down for his lectures, and he thought of nothing better to do than to ask me to spend the evening with him. He had two daughters who were about thirty years of age; they were lively, buxom girls, with prominent noses, curly hair, and light blue eyes; they had red hands and white nails; but the blessings of heaven be with them! One of them was called Linchen, and the other Minchen. I began to haunt the professor's house. I must say that he was not a fool, it is true, but only a bit cracked. In public he spoke clearly enough, though in private he stuttered horribly, and pushed his spectacles up on his forehead; but for all this he was a very learned man. But this again has nothing to do with the story. As luck would have it, one fine day I thought myself in love with Linchen. For more than six months I

remained in a state of uncertainty. It is true we spoke very little to each other, and I generally contented myself with gazing at her; but I read her sentimental compositions, squeezed her hand in secret, and in the evening I would lose myself in revery by her side, with my eyes fixed steadfastly on the moon—or rather I should say I sat with my eyes turned up. But you should have tasted the coffee she made for us! That alone should have been enough. But I still had one cause of anxiety. Figure to yourself that in my sweetest ecstasies I felt a strange sensation at my heart and a thrill would run through my body. At last I could no longer endure such happiness, and I fled. I passed two more years in foreign parts; I visited Italy, and stood in Rome before the Transfiguration, and in Florence before the Venus. There it happened that I had an attack of exaggerated enthusiasm; it was like a veritable fever. In the evening I set myself to writing verses; I began a journal: in a word, I conducted myself like the generality of travellers. Thus, for example, I know nothing whatever about painting or sculpture. I ought to have acknowledged this. But no; I must take a cicerone and go to admire the frescos.”

Again he lowered his head and pulled off his nightcap.

“At length I resumed my journey,” he continued in a weary voice, “and reached Moscow. An astonishing change came over me. During my travels I had been taciturn; at Moscow, on the contrary, I began to gossip with the greatest volubility, and Heaven only knows what a high opinion I conceived of myself. I met men who pushed indulgence even to the extent of considering me as a genius; the ladies listened with interest to my endless recitals. But I was not able to sustain myself upon this glorious pedestal. One day I learned that there was in circulation a bit of gossip about me (I don’t know who started it; but it was probably one of those old Bettys of the male sex that are plenty in Moscow). However that may be, the story grew visibly, and even put forth little whiskers as one sees a strawberry do. I flared up and tried to break the sticky lines, but I only succeeded in getting caught in them. Finally I decamped. My conduct on this occasion was, as you see, idiotic. I ought to have waited patiently for the end of this crisis, as one waits for an attack of fever to pass; and then the worthy people who had received me so well would have again opened their arms to me; the ladies who had lent a complaisant ear to my dissertations would have once more

smiled on me. But the fact is that there was nothing original about me. I felt ashamed, my dear sir, of the part I played; my conscience reproached me with passing my time in gossiping in every corner of Moscow—yesterday at Arbat, to-day at Trouba,¹ and to-morrow somewhere else—but always upon the same subject. But it was required of me, you may say. Think a moment how the men who shine in this career act; they have no scruples; on the contrary, they feel that they are in their element. There are some of them who work with their tongues for twenty years, and always in the same direction. But one must have a large share of self-conceit and a great deal of confidence in one's self. The trouble was that, having, as I have told you, no originality, I stopped half way; nature ought to have given me more self-confidence or else have deprived me of it altogether. I soon became very ill at ease; besides, my travels had almost exhausted my resources, and I had no stomach to marry the awkward daughter of some shop-keeper. That is why I returned to my estate. It seems to me," added my neighbor, regarding me askance, "that I may as well omit the first impressions I received from a country life, the sight of nature, and the calm enjoyment that solitude afforded me."

"Yes, of course," I replied.

"The more so," continued my neighbor, "because all that is nonsense; at least that is my opinion. The life that I led in the country was as melancholy as that of a chained dog. Nevertheless, when upon my return I passed in the spring-time through the birch woods, every nook and corner of which were familiar to me, I experienced a feeling of dizziness and a swelling of the heart, so vivid was the confused sense of expectation that agitated me. But this undefinable expectation is never, as you know, realized, and in its stead come other unlooked-for events, such as distempers, delays in rent, sheriff's sales, etc. etc. It was thus that I passed my life as well as I could for the first seasons after my return. I was assisted by a burgomaster of the name of Iakof, whom I selected in the place of my old steward, and who proved to be, as the event showed, still less trustworthy than his predecessor, and who had, moreover, the further disadvantage of embittering my life by the smell of tar that his boots emitted. But one fine day I remembered

1. Quarters of Moscow.

that a family of my acquaintance lived in the neighborhood. It consisted of the widow of a colonel and her two daughters. I had my drochki harnessed, and repaired to my neighbor's house. This day ought to be ever memorable. Six months later I married one of the daughters of the colonel's widow."

My companion bowed his head and lifted his hands towards heaven.

"However," he continued with energy, "I would not give you a bad idea of the defunct. God keep me from doing so! She was a noble and sweet creature, and capable of the greatest sacrifices! Although I am forced to acknowledge that, if I had never had the misfortune to lose her, I should not have had the pleasure of talking to you to-day, for I can still show you a shed from a beam of which I was more than once on the point of hanging myself.

"There are some pears," he resumed after a momentary silence, "that must be left some time under ground, in the cellar, in order that they acquire their real flavor. The defunct had, it would seem, something in common with these products of nature. It is only now that I am able to do her full justice. Thus, for example, I call to mind certain evenings that I spent with her before our marriage; not only do they inspire me with no feelings of bitterness, but the remembrance of them moves me almost to tears. The estate of my neighbors was considerable; they lived in a well-arranged old wooden house that was situated upon a slight elevation between an ill-kept garden, and a court-yard overgrown with grass. At the foot of this elevation ran a river whose banks were lined with trees covered with a thick foliage. A large terrace extended from the house to the garden; before this terrace was a long bed of roses, at either end of which was an acacia that had, when young, been twisted into a spiral by the colonel. A little farther on, in the very middle of a plantation of raspberry-bushes, long since neglected, was a little summer-house, very artistically decorated within, but so dilapidated without that it could not be seen without calling up a feeling of sadness. From the terrace a glass door opened into the drawing-room, where were to be seen two large porcelain stoves; at the right a wretched piano strewn with leaves of music copied by hand; a divan with a faded blue covering, ornamented with figures in white; a round table; and two what-nots covered with little knick-knacks in porcelain and mother-of-pearl of

the time of Catherine. Upon the wall hung a portrait representing a young woman with light hair and languishing eyes pressing a pigeon to her bosom. Upon the table was a vase of freshly picked roses;—you see I forget nothing. It was in that room and upon that terrace that was played the tragi-comedy of my loves. The mistress of the house was continually hoarse from the effects of bursts of temper. She was of a quarrelsome, tyrannic disposition, a veritable shrew. Of her two daughters, Vera was in no way distinguishable from the run of provincials; the other, Sophy,—she is the one I loved. The two sisters had a bedroom together. It was a room not so large as the drawing-room, in which were two innocent little wooden bedsteads, some albums yellow with age, a few portraits of friends—men and women—poorly enough drawn in pencil. Remarkable above all was the portrait of a gentleman whose face expressed an uncommon energy of character, and at the foot of which was an inscription not less energetic. It represented a young man who after exciting great hopes was lost in the crowd, like the rest of us. This little chamber contained also a few pots of mignonette, busts of Goethe and Schiller, a few German books, several withered garlands and other keepsakes of the same kind. I rarely entered this modest retreat. I did not like to be there; I felt a sensation of oppression, I know not why. Then—it is truly singular!—Sophy pleased me most when I had my back turned towards her, and when I mused and dreamed more or less about her upon the terrace in the evening. I would watch then the last glimmerings of the twilight, and the trees whose little green leaves, already in the shade, were sharply outlined against the rosy tint of the sky. Sophy was then in the drawing-room playing over for the hundredth time a favorite passage of Beethoven whose melody was filled with sadness. Her old mother snored peaceably on the sofa. Vera remained in the dining-room, which was inundated with a reddish light; she was making the tea. The samovar gave forth a sonorous murmur that had a charm all its own; it seemed to rejoice. The cracknels broke with a cheery little sound. There was the silvery tinkling of the tea-spoons against the cups. A canary that had been singing madly since morning suddenly became silent and contented himself with uttering an occasional chirp; he seemed to be addressing questions to some one. A few drops of water fell from a transparent cloud that passed over us. I sat and

listened, and listened and looked, and it seemed as if I loved again. At last one evening after one of these scenes I asked the old lady for the hand of her daughter; and two months later we were married. I thought I loved her; even now I am not sure that I did not love Sophy. She was a good creature, and, although rather uncommunicative, she did not lack either intelligence or sensibility. However, whether it was to be attributed to her life in the country or to some other cause, I know not; but certain it is that at the bottom of her heart (I am supposing that her heart had a bottom) there was a secret wound, or, better, a disease that preyed steadily upon her, and that it was impossible to cure. She took no notice of it herself, and I could only think of it. It was not until after our marriage, be it understood, that I discovered this. What did I not do to cure it! It was all in vain! When I was a boy I had a little finch that a cat one day seized in its claws; it was snatched away at once; but in spite of all our care the poor little finch never entirely recovered. It sat upon its perch with its feathers all ruffed up; it pined away visibly and sang no more. Finally, to crown its misfortunes, a rat got into the cage one night and bit its bill; this last mishap determined its fate. I don't know what cat had held my wife in its claws; but it is certain that she pined like my poor finch. Sometimes she was seized with an evident desire to shake off this lethargy, to play in the open air and sunlight; she would resolve to do so, but would soon return to roll herself up in her corner. Still she loved me. How many times did she not tell me that she had nothing to desire! But may the devil take it! death was in her eyes as she told me this. 'Perhaps,' thought I, 'there is some secret in her past life.' I made inquiries, but discovered nothing. Now judge for yourself; a man of originality would have shrugged his shoulders, would have perhaps heaved a few sighs, but would have ended by being resigned. Instead of conducting myself in this manner, I began to contemplate the beams of my shed. My wife preserved all the habits of an old maid. Beethoven, walks at night, mignonette, correspondence with her friends, her albums, etc. She could not accustom herself to a different manner of life, but especially to the housekeeping. However, I confess it is extremely ridiculous to see a young married woman a prey to an undefinable melancholy and singing every evening, '*Ne la reveille pas, dès l'aurore.*'¹

1. A romance very popular in Russia.

“Such is the happy existence that I led for three years. Sophy died in giving birth to her first child in the fourth year of our married life; and, strange to say, I had a presentiment that she would give me no offspring, and that the being with which she was about to endow the earth would not live upon it. I still remember well the funeral. It was in the spring. The church in our parish is small and old; the *ikonostase*¹ is blackened by age; the walls are bare; the bricks with which the interior is paved are broken in many places; on each side of the choir is an old image. The coffin was carried there and placed in the middle of the church before the gate of the *ikonostase*; it was covered with an old pall, and three candlesticks were placed about it. The service began. An old sub-deacon wearing a little queue and whose green sash was below his loins chanted sorrowfully before the lectern. The priest was also an old man; he could hardly see; but he had a good little face. The priest fulfilled at the same time the duties of a deacon. The windows were wide open and let in the scent of the fields and murmur of the weeping birches, whose tender leaves were moving in the breeze; the reddish glare of the candles paled before the golden light of the beautiful spring day. The twittering of the sparrows sounded through the church, and at times was heard the full cry of the swallow echoed from the cupola. In the midst of motes made golden by the beams of the sun were falling and rising the white heads of several peasants who were praying devoutly for the dead. A delicate thread of bluish smoke curled up from the censer. I kept my eyes fixed upon the face of my wife.² My God! death, death itself had not cured her, had not closed the wounds of her heart: there was still that mute expression of mental suffering and constraint; she seemed uneasy even in her coffin. I felt in my heart a profound bitterness. She was a good, an excellent creature; but she had done well for her own happiness to die.”

At this point the cheeks of my companion became flushed, and his eyes dull and heavy. But he recovered himself immediately, and continued in these words:

“When the sorrow that took possession of me after the death of my wife had entirely disappeared, I made arrange-

1. A railing that in Greek churches separates the altar from the choir; it is covered with images.

2. In Russia the coffin remains uncovered until the moment it is lowered into the grave.

ments to go to work, as the expression is. I took service in the chief town of the government; but I could not accustom myself to the life of an employé; the great rooms gave me the headache and my eyes gave out. Other reasons were added to these annoyances, and I handed in my resignation. I wanted to go to Moscow, but I lacked the necessary money; and besides—I have told you I was resigned; but this change came about gradually and suddenly. It had operated a long time in my feelings, but my head still resisted it. I attributed the calm in my feelings, and the modesty that had come upon me, to the influence of the country and to misfortune. But I had also for a long time been cognizant of the fact that nearly all my neighbors, male and female, old and young, had become entirely familiar with my instruction, with my travels in foreign parts, and with the other advantages of the education that I had received. They had even become accustomed to treat me sometimes rudely, and sometimes without ceremony; nor would they listen when I made an observation. I forgot to tell you that in the first year of my married life ennui had driven me to occupy myself with literature; I even sent to a journal a little article written in my own style,—and a novel one I think,—but shortly afterwards I received a very polite note from the editor telling me, among other things, that, while he could not deny that I had wit, I wanted talent; and that in literary pursuits talent was essential. I learned, moreover, that a Muscovite—and for that matter an estimable young man—who had stopped a while in our chief town, had spoken of me to a neighbor of the governor as having a narrow and already exhausted mind. But the delusion, almost voluntary, to which I had been so long subject was not yet entirely dissipated. I was loath to slap my own face, as it were. However, I at last opened my eyes. This is how it was brought about. The Ispravnik came one day to call my attention to a wooden bridge situated on one of my estates which had broken down; but I had not the money to repair it. After swallowing a glass of brandy, this indulgent guardian of public interests reproached me paternally for my negligence and advised me to content myself with ordering my peasants to throw a little rubbish on the bridge. Then he began to smoke and to talk of the elections that were soon to come off. A certain Orbassanof was at that time seeking the office of marshal of the nobility; he was a gossip, and besides he accepted bribes without the slightest scruple. He was not rich, nor was he of a distin-

guished origin. I expressed what I thought without reserve; I confess I considered I was much superior to Orbassanof. The Ispravnik looked at me, struck me a friendly tap on the shoulder, and said in a good-natured way, 'Ah, Vassili Vassilitch, it is not for men like you and me to pass judgment on such people; it is none of our business: a cricket should know its own corner.' 'How?' I replied angrily, 'it seems to me that Orbassanof and myself are perfectly equal.' The Ispravnik took his pipe from his lips, opened his eyes wide, and burst into a roar of laughter. 'Joker!' he exclaimed when the fit of hilarity permitted him, 'that is too good a joke! You're a good one!' The Ispravnik continued to rally me until the moment he left. He soon began to address me in the most familiar manner, and to give me an occasional nudge with his elbow. He departed; but this little scene brought me to my senses. The cup was already full, and it needed but a drop to make it run over. The visit of the Ispravnik was that drop. I began to pace the room, and, stopping before a mirror, I examined for a long time my troubled features; I ran out my tongue gently, and began to shake my head with a smile of irony. The scales had at last fallen from my eyes, and I saw clearly the reflection of 'my features in the mirror, and how far I was a being of no value, useless, a man without originality.'

My companion stopped.

"I think I remember," he resumed sorrowfully, "that Voltaire has depicted in one of his tragedies a man who rejoices in having reached the utmost limits of misfortune. Although my destiny presents nothing tragic, I cannot help comparing myself with this personage. I have learned to know the bitter transports of a reasoning despair. I know the happiness that comes from lying in bed in the morning and cursing for hours with perfect deliberation the day and hour of my birth. It required a little time to bring back my calmness of mind; but that is natural enough: judge for yourself. The want of money kept me in that village that I detested. Neither domestic life, nor service, nor literature—nothing, in fact, had succeeded with me. I shunned the society of the neighboring proprietors; reading had no charms for me; and since I had given up my gossiping and my enthusiastic descriptions, our young ladies of sentimental turns of mind and dropsical figures, who were always ready to exclaim, '*Oh! la vie!*' in a state of feverish exaltation, with a shake of their ringlets, no longer deigned to accord me the slight-

est attention. It was impossible for me to live in absolute solitude; and besides I should never have succeeded. Do you know the course I took? I began to run after all the neighboring proprietors. I was as one drunk with disgust for myself, and I voluntarily sought all the petty humiliations that could sink me still lower in their eyes. The servants did not wait upon me at the table; the master of the house received me coldly, and ended by paying not the slightest attention to me. I was not permitted to take part in the general conversation, and so I retired to the corner and began to devote myself to the task of sustaining with appreciative exclamations the remarks of some idiot who a few years before at Moscow would gladly have kissed the print of my foot or the hem of my cloak. I did not even permit myself to believe that by acting in this way I was giving myself up to the bitter joys of irony. And besides, can one divert one's self when one is alone? That is the way I lived for several successive years, and I have not changed my mode of life."

"That resembles nothing," growled at this moment in the next chamber Kantagrioukine. "What idiot is it that takes it into his head to talk there in the middle of the night?"

My companion hid his head quickly under the bed-clothes, and then, uncovering himself a little, looked timidly at me, shaking his finger.

"Ts! ts!" he murmured, as if he were bowing and demanding pardon of Kantagrioukine in the other room. He added very soon in a respectful tone: "Pardon me; please to pardon me. He is permitted to sleep, he has a right to sleep," he continued in a low voice; "he must recover his strength, were it only that he might be able to eat with the same appetite to-morrow. We have no right to disturb his rest. Besides I think I have told you all I have to say, and it is very probable that you too want to sleep. I wish you good-night."

The speaker turned quickly towards the wall and buried his head in the pillows.

"Permit me," I said, "to ask your name."

He lifted his head abruptly.

"No; in the name of heaven, do not ask my name, and do not seek to discover it! My name will remain forever unknown to you, a Vassili Vassilitch cruelly tried by fate. Besides I have nothing really original in me, and I do not deserve a name of my own. However, if you must give me

226 *THE HAMLET OF THE TCHIGRI DISTRICT.*

one, call me the Hamlet of the district of Tchigri. There are some of these Hamlets in every district, though perhaps you haven't met any of them yet. Adieu; sleep well." He buried his head again under the pillows, and when I was called in the morning he was no longer in the room. He had left before daybreak.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

I WAS sitting at the foot of a tree in a birch wood one day in autumn near the middle of September. A fine rain had been falling since morning, and a few scattering rays of the sun broke from time to time through the clouds: the weather was variable. The sky, covered with a thin white vapor, would suddenly brighten up in spots; and the clouds, as they opened for a moment or two, would disclose a blue and limpid sky that seemed like a soft, beneficent eye. I looked about me on all sides, and lent an attentive ear to the slightest sound. The foliage above my head was almost motionless; the sound that came from it as it stirred was alone enough to mark the season of the year. It was not the joyful tremor of the scarcely opened leaves, the long sweet murmur of the summer, or the cool, low rustling that is heard towards the end of autumn; but it was a sort of whispering babble, languid and scarcely audible. A gentle breath of wind at moments touched the tops of the trees. The interior of the wood, which was filled with dampness, wore a different look each moment as the sun shone out or went behind a cloud. Sometimes the full rays of the sun suddenly filled the woods with a gay resplendency: the slender trunks of the birches, standing a little apart from each other, assumed all at once the sheen of white satin; the little leaves that strewed the ground were enamelled with a thousand different tints and glistened like the finest gold. The graceful stems of the tall feathery ferns, which were already clothed in the rich hues of autumn, and which are not excelled by the grape in full maturity, crossed and intertwined in innumerable shapes under my eyes. But the sun went in, and everything in the wood straightway took a bluish tint; the brilliant hues disappeared; the trunks of the trees turned to a dull white like that of the new-fallen snow whose surface has not yet been touched by the cold rays of the winter sun. Then a fine and almost imperceptible rain furtively

invaded the wood and spread through them with its low murmur. The leaves of the birches were still for the most part green, but of a green already very pale; here and there could be distinguished a few new leaves all red or of a golden yellow. Then it was a sight to see them kindle, as a sunbeam glided in, flecking in its course with many colors the network of little dripping branches through which it passed. Not a bird was singing; they remained crouched in silence under the leaves: the finch alone at times uttered its mocking cry that echoed through the silence like the sound of a steel bell.

Before reaching this wood of birches I had passed through a forest of magnificent aspens. I confess I do not like these trees with their pale lilac bark and grayish, metallic-looking verdure that they spread out like a trembling fan; I do not like the constant swaying of their dirty round leaves, awkwardly attached to their long stems. The aspen is beautiful only on certain summer evenings when, towering from a plain of bushes, it catches the rays of the setting sun: it sparkles and trembles; a yellow and reddish light inundates it from top to bottom. The aspen pleases me too in clear, windy weather. It rustles and sways in the gusts, and each leaf carried out by the motion seems for the moment to separate and take flight into the fields about. But generally I dislike aspens; and it was for that reason that I had passed through the first woods without stopping, and had taken refuge under a birch whose lower branches were but a short distance from the ground and therefore afforded me a shelter from the rain. After admiring for a time the spectacle that was before me, I ended by falling into that calm deep sleep that is vouchsafed only to sportsmen.

I do not know just how long I slept, but when I awoke the whole interior of the woods was filled with sunlight, and the azure of the sky that pierced everywhere through the foliage seemed to sparkle with light. The clouds had disappeared before the puffs of a capricious wind. The storm had cleared away, and the air had that peculiar dry freshness that fills the heart with a feeling of relief, and almost always announces that a calm clear evening is to succeed a rainy day. I was about to arouse myself in order to continue my sport, when my eye lighted on a human form that was resting motionless in the woods. I looked carefully: it was a young peasant-girl. She was about twenty feet from me, with her head bent forward in a pensive manner and her hands resting

negligently on her knees; one of them was half opened and almost entirely concealed by a large nosegay of wild flowers. The breast of the young dreamer was heaving, and at each movement the flowers slipped over her striped skirt. The white waist that she wore was closed at the throat and wrists, and clung to her figure in short soft folds; a double row of large yellow pearls went round her neck and fell upon her breast. She was pretty. Her light brown hair was divided into two coils, carefully smoothed and supported by a very narrow red band that surmounted a forehead like ivory. The rest of her face was covered with that golden tan that is peculiar to fine delicate skins. I could not make out her eyes, for she kept them cast down; but I remarked her long eyelashes, her delicately arched eyebrows, and her humid lids; on one of her cheeks was the trace of a tear that had stopped at her pale lips. Her nose was a trifle thick and short, but it was in no way out of keeping with the rest of her features, which, as I have remarked, were very pleasing. The expression that animated them was full of charm; it indicated the gentleness, the modesty, and the naive melancholy of a child that cannot yet reason about its griefs. It was easy to see that she was waiting for some one. A slight crackling was heard in the woods, and she immediately raised her head and looked about; then I saw shine through the transparent shade that surrounded her, her eyes, limpid and timorous as those of a gazelle. She listened attentively for a few moments, with eyes turned in the direction of the crackling, sighed, then slowly turned her head, and, bending it lower than before, began to sort carelessly the flowers on her knees. Her eyelids were red; a bitter smile crossed her lips; and another tear escaped from her long lashes and glided glistening down her cheek.

About half an hour passed in this way. The poor girl did not stir from the spot; at times she would move her arms sadly and listen—and listen. Again something stirred in the woods: she trembled. The sound continued; it became more distinct. It came nearer, and I perceived that it was made by some one walking at a rapid pace. The girl drew herself up and appeared frightened; her watchful look seemed to tremble, but it soon lit up with hope. A man was seen advancing quickly through the thicket. As soon as she was reassured the color mounted suddenly to her cheeks and a joyous smile spread over her lips; but she fell back almost immediately pale and agitated, and remained so

until the man who was approaching stopped by her side; then she lifted to him a look tender, fearful, and well-nigh supplicating.

Remaining crouched in my hiding-place, I examined this man attentively, and the impression he produced upon me was not at all agreeable. He was, to judge from appearances, the favorite valet of some rich young proprietor of the neighborhood. His dress betrayed his pretensions to good taste and elegant negligence; he wore a bronze-colored short top-coat, buttoned to the throat,—probably a piece of his master's cast-off clothing,—a pink-colored cravat with yellow ends, and a cap of black velvet with a gold band and a vizor coming down close over his forehead. The rounded collar of his white shirt cut his cheeks pitilessly and reached to his ears; his starched cuffs covered half his fingers, which were red and shapeless; but he had on several rings of gold and silver ornamented with small turquoises. His red, impudent face was one of those that, as far as I could make it out, are to men insupportable, but unfortunately, it must be said, frequently enough charm women. He evidently endeavored to give to his rather coarse features an expression of scornful indifference. He was continually winking his light gray eyes, which, but for this, were already almost imperceptible. He assumed an air of superiority, lowered the corners of his mouth, yawned affectedly, stroked in an off-hand way the reddish curls of his carefully arranged hair, and twisted the little yellow hairs that bristled on his upper lip; in a word, he gave himself airs of the most ridiculous affectation. He had put on these affected manners as soon as he saw the young peasant waiting for him. When he had drawn slowly near her with measured steps, he stopped, shrugged his shoulders, thrust his hands into the pockets of his top-coat, and after honoring the poor girl with a passing, indifferent glance, he sat himself with deliberation at her side.

“Well,” he said with a yawn, continuing to look in the other direction, and stretching one of his legs, “have you been here long?”

The girl remained a few moments without power to answer.

“Yes, I have, Victor Alexandritch,” she said at length in a low voice.

“Ah,” he replied, taking off his cap and passing his hand gravely through his thick hair that grew almost down to his

eyebrows; then carefully putting his cap on again, and looking about him with an air of importance. "Yes, I forgot. Besides it rained, you know." At this he yawned. "I have an affair that worries me;" and he yawned again. "I don't know what to do about it, and the master is impatient. We start to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" exclaimed the girl, regarding him with a look of alarm.

"Yes, to-morrow. But come," he resumed angrily, seeing that the girl trembled and bent her head down, "I beg of you, Akoulina, not to cry; you know that I can't stand it." As he said this he wrinkled his flat nose with a frown. "If you are going to take on so, I shall leave. How ridiculous you are, cry-baby!"

"I won't cry," replied Akoulina quickly, with an effort to restrain her tears. "Then you go to-morrow," she continued after a pause. "God only knows when we shall see each other again, Victor Alexandritch."

"We shall see each other again," he replied; "don't worry about that. If it is not next year, it will be some time. I believe my master wants to go into service at St. Petersburg," he continued carelessly, speaking a little through his nose. "Perhaps we shall go abroad."

"You will forget me, Victor Alexandritch," said Akoulina sadly.

"No; why should I? I shall not forget you. But you must be reasonable, and not play the fool. Obey your father. No, I won't forget you; don't worry about that." And he yawned again, stretching himself at full length.

"Don't forget me, Victor Alexandritch," she continued in a supplicating tone. "You know how I have loved you; and I have given myself all to you. Obey my father, Victor Alexandritch? What would you have me do?"

"What?" he replied, still lying on his back, with his arm under his head, and his voice seemed to come from his stomach.

"You know very well, Victor Alexandritch; you know very well—" And she did not finish.

Instead of answering, Victor began to play with the steel charms that hung from his watch-chain.

"You are an intelligent girl, Akoulina," he said at length. "That is why I beg you not to be foolish. I wish you well, do you understand? No, you are not a fool; you are not entirely a peasant; your mother, too, has not always been a

peasant. But you have, however, no education; so you must listen carefully when I give you advice."

"You frighten me, Victor Alexandritch."

"Now what folly that is, my dear! Is there really anything to be frightened about? But what have you there?" he asked, moving nearer to her. "Flowers?"

"Yes," said Akoulina sadly, "there is some field-milfoil," she continued, brightening a little; "it is good for calves. There is some plantain; it cures king's evil. See what a queer little flower that is; I never saw one like it. Here are some germanders, and beside them are violets. This is for you," she added, holding up a little bunch of bluets tied with a bit of grass. "Do you want them?"

The young valet reached out his hand and took the nose-gay; he smelt of the flowers unconcernedly, and began to crush them between his fingers, lifting his eyes towards the sky with a thoughtful, important air. Akoulina looked at him, and there was in her eyes an expression of tenderness, devotion, and love that was truly touching. One could see that the fear of displeasing him alone stopped her tears; but that she was taking leave of him and admiring him for the last time. As for him, he remained stretched out like a sultan, and seemed to receive her homage with a truly noble condescension. I confess that his red face—whose look of assumed indifference could not conceal a feeling of satisfied self-conceit—inspired me with a profound disgust. Akoulina was so pretty at that moment! She had opened her heart and abandoned herself entirely to him; while he—he let the bunch of flowers drop upon the grass, took from the pocket of his coat an eye-glass with a bronze setting, and tried to fix it in his eye; but it was in vain that he scowled, and screwed up his cheek, and twisted his nose—the glass would fall into his hand.

"What have you there?" asked the girl with a look of astonishment.

"An eye-glass," he replied.

"What is it for?"

"To see better with."

"Let me try it."

Victor looked annoyed, but he handed the eye-glass to her.

"Be careful not to break it."

"Don't be afraid; I shan't break it." She put the glass timidly to her right eye. "I can't see anything," she said naively.

"You must shut your eye," he said to her with the air of a dissatisfied master. She shut the eye to which she had put the glass. "Not that one, idiot, the other," exclaimed Victor; and before she had time to do as he said, he snatched the glass away from her.

Akoulina turned red, gave a little laugh, and then looked away.

"It does not seem to have been made for you," she said to him.

"I should think so!"

The poor girl gave a deep sigh.

"Ah, Victor Alexandritch," she continued suddenly, "how sad we shall be when you are no longer here!"

Victor wiped the glass upon the skirt of his coat and put it back into his pocket.

"Oh, no doubt," he said at length, "at first." He placed his hand upon her shoulder in a patronizing manner; she took it gently and kissed it. "Oh, no doubt," he continued, smiling with a satisfied air. "You are a good girl; but what is there to be done? Judge for yourself. We can't stay here forever, my master and I. Here's winter coming on, and you know that winter is insupportable in the country. At Petersburg it is another affair altogether. There there are wonders that you, poor girl, cannot imagine even in your dreams: houses, streets, society, education,—everything, in short." Akoulina listened eagerly, with her lips half open like a child's. "But after all," he added, rolling over on the grass, "what is the use of talking to you about all that? You can't understand me."

"Why do you think that, Victor Alexandritch?" she said. "I understand you; I understand you perfectly."

"Indeed, is that so?"

Akoulina dropped her eyes. "At one time you did not speak to me in that way, Victor Alexandritch," she replied without raising her head.

"At one time," he said with a gesture of impatience. "But it is time for me to go;" and he leaned upon his elbow.

"Stay a little longer," said Akoulina in a supplicating voice.

"What for? I have already said good-by."

"Stay," repeated Akoulina.

Victor lay back again and began to whistle. Akoulina still looked at him; but I could see that her breast was

heaving and that her lips trembled. Her pale cheeks colored slightly.

"Victor Alexandritch," she exclaimed at last in a heart-rending voice, "it is very mean of you, Victor Alexandritch. I call God to witness."

"What do you mean by that?" he said with a frown.

He leaned on his elbow and turned his face towards her.

"It is very mean of you, Victor Alexandritch. You don't even say a single kind word to me before leaving me, poor deserted woman that I am."

"What would you have me say?"

"How should I know? You know better than I, Victor Alexandritch. Here you are leaving me, and you don't even say— What have I done to be treated so?"

"You're a strange girl. What do you want?"

"Not even a single word?"

"Come, you're raving," he said angrily, and he stood up.

"Don't be angry with me," she said, restraining her tears.

"I am not angry with you; but I tell you you are a little fool. What would you have me do? You know I can't marry you.¹ What do you want, then? Tell me." He craned his neck and spread open his fingers as if he was waiting for an answer.

"Nothing; I ask nothing," she stammered in reply, timidly putting her trembling hands out to him. "You might have said a single little word to me." But she could contain herself no longer; a torrent of tears burst from her eyes.

"Now she's off again," said Victor, calmly pushing his cap down over his eyes.

"I want nothing," she continued, sobbing, with her face hidden in her hands. "But what will my family say? How will they treat me? What will become of me? Poor deserted creature that I am! I am to be given to a man that I do not love!"

"Go on, go on," said Victor in a low voice, becoming impatient.

"And he won't even say a single word to me—not one! If he would but speak like this: 'Akoulina—'" But she could not finish. She fell on the grass on her face and wept bitterly. Her whole body shook convulsively. Now and then

1. A *dvorovi* would consider it a disgrace to marry a peasant; it would be a *mésalliance*.

her head would heave. Despair, that she had until then restrained, gained complete mastery of her, and she abandoned herself to it. Victor remained some moments watching her; then he shrugged his shoulders, turned about and walked rapidly away.

After a short time Akoulina became calmer. She lifted her head, rose quickly, glanced about her, and clasped her hands. She wanted to run after him, but her legs failed her, and she sank upon her knees. I could no longer restrain myself, but rushed towards her. No sooner did she see me, however, than she uttered a little cry and disappeared behind the trees, leaving her flowers scattered over the grass.

I stopped, and, picking up the bunch of bluets, left the woods and went out into the plain. The sun, which already touched the horizon, had become much less resplendent and was no longer brilliant; but it diffused a pale, even light. There remained at the most but an hour of daylight, and yet the first tints of the twilight could scarcely be distinguished. A fitful breeze reached me as I passed over the dry, yellow glebe that covered the fields. The little withered leaves that it picked up were wafted hurriedly across the road that bordered the wood; the trees that rose like a wall on one side rustled sadly as they felt its breath. The brownish grass, the little bushes, and even the smallest straws were covered with those innumerable gossamers that fill the air in autumn. I stopped, and a feeling of sadness came over me. Nature still retained some traces of freshness; but it was the last smile which already presaged the horrors of the winter that was coming on with grand strides. Above at a great height a crow flew heavily through the air; it turned its head and, eying me askance, passed into the woods, uttering at intervals its lugubrious caw. A large flight of pigeons, a sign of autumn, appeared in the direction of the farm-buildings, and, forming suddenly in a column, settled down on the fields. The rolling of an empty wagon was heard behind a bare hillock.

I regained the house; but the memory of the poor Akoulina remained fresh in my mind. I have still the bunch of bluets, although they are long since faded.

CHAPTER XVII.

TATIANA BORISSOVNA AND HER NEPHEW.

PUT your hand in mine, dear reader, and come with me. The weather is magnificent: it is the month of May. The blue vault of heaven is undimmed; the young leaves of the willow are as fresh and brilliant as if they had just been washed; the smooth, wide road that we follow is carpeted with the red-stalked plant that sheep delight to browse on; to the right and left on the long hillsides softly wave the fields of rye, still green and delicate; little flaky clouds hover in the sky and cast their light shadows here and there upon the vast plains. In the distance are seen black forests, ponds with their glistening surfaces, and villages with thatched roofs. Larks soar up by hundreds, carolling, and then precipitate themselves head first into the fields and stand with outstretched throats upon the clods of earth. White-beaked crows stop in the middle of the road, gaze at you with heads lowered for a better sight, watch you pass, and then fly heavily away. A peasant is ploughing his field on the opposite side of a ravine. A bay colt with short tail and rough mane gallops along on its feeble legs beside its mother, and you hear its feeble neighing. We enter a birch wood, and breathe in the strong, fresh odor. Here is the entrance to a village. The coachman gets down, the horses snort; the one in the shafts switches its tail and rubs its head against the *douga*. The huge gate creaks on its hinges. The coachman remounts the box. Forward! the village is before us. We pass by the first houses and turn to the right; we come to the foot of a ravine and drive along a dike. On the opposite side of a little pond, behind the rounded tops of a clump of apple-trees and lilacs, is seen a wooden roof, once painted red, surmounted by two chimneys. The coachman turns to the right along a wall; the smothered barking of three dogs whose voices seem cracked with age is heard, and we enter a large gate that stands wide open. The coachman drives briskly into a large courtyard sur-

rounded with stables and coach-houses, bows graciously to an old housekeeper who bestrides the high sill of the storehouse door, and at last stops before the steps of a little house whose walls are blackened by age and whose windows seem all to expand. We are at Tatiana Borissovna's. But there she is opening a window and nodding to us. "Good-day, mother!"

Tatiana Borissovna is a woman of about fifty, with large, rather prominent gray eyes, a short nose, red cheeks, and a double chin. Her features beam with goodness and sweetness. She is a remarkable woman. Early left a widow, she lives always on her little estate, seldom visits her neighbors, and takes pleasure only in seeing young people. Her parents were poor proprietors and gave her no education; that is to say, they did not teach her French. Tatiana Borissovna has never been even to Moscow; but, in spite of her want of education, her manners are simple and kindly. She is sensible and entirely free from prejudice; in short, she is so unlike all other women of her condition that it is impossible not to be surprised. How? A woman who passes the whole year in the country in complete isolation and does not devote herself to gossip! who speaks without shouting and does not courtesy! whom the most trivial events do not excite to rebellion! who does not choke in eating! whom curiosity does not annoy! What a miracle! Tatiana Borissovna generally wears a gray silk dress and a cap trimmed with lilac ribbons that fall upon her shoulders. She is fond of good cheer, but not to excess, and she leaves to her housekeeper the task of preparing every kind of preserves and pickles. "How then does she occupy her time?" you will ask. "Is she fond of reading?" No, she does not read; and, to tell the truth, reading would hardly suit her. When she has no visitors, she knits by the window in winter, and in summer she walks in the garden; waters and cares for the flowers; passes entire hours playing with the kittens; feeds the pigeons; and pays very little attention to housekeeping. But when some young proprietor of the neighborhood who happens to be in her good graces comes to see her, Tatiana Borissovna arouses herself; she makes him sit down, treats him to tea, listens attentively to his stories, jokes and taps him on the cheeks, all the while contributing very little to the conversation. She likes to be a comforter, and can at times give good advice. Of how many confidences and family secrets is she

the depositary! How often have her hands been watered with tears! She usually places herself in front of her guest, with her elbow resting lightly on the table, and then she watches him with so much interest and with a smile so kind that the visitor says to himself, "What an excellent woman Tatiana Borissovna is! I think I'll tell her what I have on my mind." There is experienced an indefinable sensation of comfort in her little commodiously arranged apartments; it is always, so to speak, fair weather there. Tatiana Borissovna is an extraordinary woman, yet no one is impressed by her. Her good sense, her firmness, her breadth of mind, her lively sympathy in the joys and sorrows of her fellow-beings—in a word, all the qualities that distinguish her seem innate, and she exercises them naturally and without the least effort. It is impossible to imagine her other than she is, so that she does not receive full credit for her virtues. Above all things she loves to witness the games and pranks of young people: with her arms crossed, her head thrown back, her eyes half closed, and a smile on her lips, she watches them from her arm-chair; and all at once her breast heaves, she sighs, and exclaims, "Oh, my children, my children!"

One feels a desire to be near enough to her to be able to take her by the hand and say, "Listen, Tatiana Borissovna: don't you know well that you do not do yourself justice? Although you are without education and of great simplicity of mind, you are none the less a very distinguished woman."

Even her name has a peculiar attraction: it is agreeable to the ear; there is something familiar about it; it is pleasant to speak, and it calls up a smile of satisfaction. How many times has it not happened to me to ask of some peasant that I met, "What road must I take, brother, to go" (I suppose a case) "to Grochefka?" "Go first, father, to Viasovoi, and from there go to Tatiana Borissovna's; when you reach Tatiana Borissovna's, inquire: they will show you the way there." As he pronounces the name of Tatiana Borissovna, the peasant wags his head with a peculiar expression.

Her household is not large, and in no way comports with her fortune. The housekeeping, the laundry, the pantry, and the kitchen are under the control of Agatha, a toothless old woman who weeps on every occasion, but who is wonderfully kind; she was the nurse of Tatiana Borissovna. Two stout young girls with cheeks as round

and red as apples are under the orders of this housekeeper. The duties of footman, steward, and butler are performed by an old servant of seventy, named Polycarpe, a character of unequalled originality, who has read a few Russian authors; an old violinist, he is a great admirer of Viotti; but above all he is a declared enemy of Napoleon, whom he calls contemptuously *Bonapartichka*,¹ and a passionate lover of nightingales. He has five or six of them in his chamber, and as soon as spring begins to open he will pass whole days seated near his nightingales, watching for the awakening of their song. No sooner is one heard than he covers his face with both hands and exclaims, "How exquisite, how exquisite!" and the tears roll down his cheeks. The major-domo has for an assistant his grandson, Vacia, a bright-eyed, curly-headed boy of twelve. Polycarpe idolizes him, and scolds him from morning till night. He has taken charge of his bringing up. "Come, Vacia," he will say, "repeat me this: 'Bonapartichka is a brigand.'" "And what will you give me, grandpapa?" "I'll give you nothing. Who are you? Aren't you a Russian?" "I'm an Amtchani-an, grandpapa; Amtchensk² is where I was born." "Oh, blockhead! Then you don't know where Amtchensk is?" "How should I know?" "Amtchensk is in Russia, idiot!" "Well, what of that?" "What of that, do you say? The late most illustrious Prince Mikail Ilarionovitch Golénichtef-Koutousof de Smolensk deigned with God's help to drive Bonapartichka from the territory of Russia. On this very occasion was made the song, '*Bonaparte don't want to dance: he has lost his garters.*' Do you understand? He liberated your country." "What has that to do with me?" "Little fool! idiot! if the most illustrious Prince Mikail Ilarionovitch had not driven out Bonapartichka, some *moussier* would be now knocking you about the head with a cudgel. He would come up this way to you, and ask, '*Com-mane vous porté vous,*' and then whack! whack!" "And I, I'd hit him a lick in the stomach!" "And he would say, '*Bonne-jour, bonjour, vené ici,*' and he would knock your topknot off." "And I'd give him one in his legs, in his crooked legs!" "You are right; they do have crooked legs! But

1. Little Bonaparte.

2. The common people gave to the city of Mtsensk the name of Amtchensk, and the inhabitants of this city called themselves Amtchanians. They are enterprising, determined men; which fact gave rise to the saying that one applies to an enemy, "May an Amtchani-an get into his house!"

what would you do if he should try to tie your hands?" "I wouldn't let him; I'd call Mikeï, the coachman." "Do you think, Vacia, that a Frenchman would not be enough for a man like Mikeï?" "No, he wouldn't; Mikeï is mighty strong, now!" "Well, what would you do then?" "We would give it to him on his back, and then—" "And then he would begin to cry, '*Pardone, pardone, si vous plé!*'" "And we would say, 'No, no, *si vous plé!* Frenchman!'" "I like that! you're a brave lad, Vacia. Come, now, shout, 'Bonapartichka is a brigand!'" "And will you give me some sugar?" "Little rascal!"

Tatiana Borissovna has but a slight acquaintance with the women who live in her neighborhood; they rarely call upon her, and she cannot make herself agreeable to them. She is put to sleep by the murmur of their voices; she wakes with a start, she tries to keep her eyes open, and then dozes off again. As a rule, Tatiana Borissovna does not like women. One of her friends, a modest, quiet young fellow of the neighborhood, had a sister, an old maid of thirty-eight and a half; an excellent creature at bottom, but affected, and of an exaggerative, romantic turn of mind. Her brother often talked to her about her neighbor. One fine morning this dear creature has a horse saddled and, without breathing a word to any one, repairs to Tatiana Borissovna's. Now she enters the ante-room in her long flowing habit, and hat covered with a green veil, with her curls flying in the wind. She passes before Vacia, who rests dumbfounded, taking her for a roussalka, and rushes into the drawing-room. Tatiana Borissovna is frightened by her; she tries to rise, but her knees fail her. "Tatiana Borissovna," says the apparition, in a supplicating voice, "pardon my boldness; I am the sister of your friend Alexis Nikolaïevitch K——, and he has talked to be about you so much that I determined to make your acquaintance." "It is too great an honor," stammered the mistress of the house in her surprise. The neighbor took off her hat, spread out the ringlets that fell down over her cheeks, seated herself by the side of Tatiana Borissovna and took her hand. "Now at last I see," she began in a tender, pensive tone, "that noble, sweet, pure, saintly being—that woman at once ingenuous and profound! How fortunate I am! How fond we shall become of each other! At last I shall experience a few moments of calm! She is just as I imagined her to myself," she continued in a low voice, turning her eyes languishingly

towards Tatiana Borissovna. "But you are not offended with me, my dear, my tender friend?" "How could I be so? I am too happy. But won't you have a cup of tea?" The neighbor smiled indulgently. "*Wie wahr, wie unreflectirt!*"¹ she answered, speaking to herself. "Permit me to press you to my heart, my dear."

The old maid spent three hours at Tatiana Borissovna's in one continual stream of talk. She had undertaken to make her new friend understand the good points of her own character. As soon as she was gone, the poor Tatiana Borissovna got into her bath, swallowed a cup of lime-flower tea, and took to her bed. But the old maid returned the next morning, and promised the unfortunate proprietress to pay her a visit every day. She proposed—as she said—to complete the education of this rich nature, and to accomplish its development. She would probably have ended by bringing on a fit of sickness before long, had she not after about two weeks become completely disenchanted with the friend of her brother and fallen in love with a young student who happened to come into the country, and with whom she began a correspondence that took all her time. In her epistles she wished him, as usual, a pure and holy life, offered herself as a sacrifice, did not wish to merit any title but that of sister, lost herself in endless descriptions of nature, invoked Goethe, Schiller, and Bettina, discussed German philosophy—and finished by driving the poor fellow to desperation. But his youth soon regained the ascendancy, and one fine morning he awoke with such a feeling of hatred for "his sister and best friend" that he came near beating his servant; and, for a long while after, the slightest allusion to "a love pure and devoted" made him furious. From this time forth, Tatiana Borissovna avoided still more than ever all relations with the ladies of the neighborhood.

But alas! there is nothing perfect in this world. All that I have just told you about the household of this excellent lady is an old story. The calm that reigned in her house is destroyed forever. She admitted there at least a year ago one of her nephews, an artist from St. Petersburg. These are the circumstances that took him there:

Some eight years ago an orphan about twelve years old, named Androucha, lived with Tatiana Borissovna. He was the son of her brother. The little Androucha had large

1. "How natural and unaffected she is!"

limpid eyes, a little mouth, a clear-cut nose, and a high forehead. His voice was low and timid; his bearing modest and respectful. He was thoughtful and polite towards strangers, and he kissed his aunt's hand with all the tenderness of an orphan. You could scarcely set your foot inside the room before he would hand you a chair. He never indulged in the mischievous pranks common at his age. He was always quiet, and would stay in the corner buried in a book without moving, not even venturing to lean against the back of the chair. If visitors came in, Androucha would get up, smile bashfully, and blush. As soon as they were gone he would sit down again, take a little brush with a looking-glass in the back of it out of his pocket, and gently smooth his hair. He had very early shown a great taste for drawing; and every time a bit of paper fell into his hands he would ask Agafia, the housemaid, for a pair of scissors, carefully cut the paper square, trace a border about it, and set to work. He would draw an eye with an enormous pupil, a Greek nose, or, still better, a house surmounted by a chimney from which issued a long spiral column of smoke, with a dog in front that looked like a bench, and a tree with two pigeons on it. Below would be the following inscription: "Drawn by André Belovsorof, such a day and such a year, in the village of Mali-Bryki." But it was during the fifteen or twenty days that preceded Tatiana Borissovna's birthday that he would draw with the greatest fury. He would be the first to congratulate her, and would offer her a roll of paper tied with a pink favor. Tatiana Borissovna would kiss him upon the forehead and untie the favor. The paper would unroll and disclose to the curious regards of the spectator a round temple heavily shaded, with columns and an altar, above which would be a crown and a flaming heart. At the top of the sheet would be a scroll bearing the following device written in very fine characters: "To my aunt and benefactress, Tatiana Borissovna, from her most humble and devoted nephew, as a testimonial of his devoted affection." Tatiana Borissovna would give him another kiss and a rouble. But she was not greatly attached to him. The obsequious manners of Androucha aroused her sovereign displeasure. However, he was growing up, and she began to be anxious about his future. An unforeseen event relieved her from this embarrassment.

One day about eight years ago she received a visit from a certain Peter Mikallovitch Bénévolenski, a college coun-

cillor and knight of several orders. He had formerly held an official position in the neighboring city, and had then been a very constant visitor at Tatiana Borissovna's. After a few years he had gone to St. Petersburg, where he had obtained a rather important post under one of the ministers, and during one of his missions on business of the state he remembered his old friend and resolved to go and spend a few days with her "in the calm of a country life." Tatiana Borissovna had received him with her customary cordiality, and Bénévolenski— But before going farther with my story let me, my dear reader, depict for you this new personage.

Bénévolenski was a rather stout man of medium height; there was something effeminate about him; his legs were large and short, and his hands soft and puffy. He always wore a swallow-tailed coat rather large and extremely neat; his cravat was very high, and his linen of a dazzling whiteness; a gold chain glittered on his silk waistcoat; a ring mounted with a precious stone adorned the forefinger of his right hand; his perruque was of a golden brown. He spoke with a soft but persuasive tone, and walked with deliberation. He had an attractive smile, an attractive expression in his eye, an attractive turn of the chin in his cravat, and was, in short, a most attractive person. Heaven had, moreover, endowed him with an excellent heart: he was easily moved to tears or to enthusiasm. And lastly, he had a passion for art that was certainly most disinterested, for it was a subject that he knew nothing—absolutely nothing—about. It would have been useless to attempt to discover the origin of this passion; it rested upon causes that were mysterious and impenetrable. In other respects everything about him denoted a matter-of-fact man, such as are met by the dozen in—but individuals of this character are not scarce in our country.

The admiration that such men profess for art and artists renders them inexpressibly tedious. There is no martyrdom comparable to the weariness induced by their conversation and company. They are veritable honeyed logs. Thus for example they will never speak of Raphael or Correggio without using some such periphrasis as "The divine Sanzio, the inimitable *Allegri*." The most commonplace, affected, and self-sufficient talent receives from them the name of genius, and great genius. "The blue sky of Italy," "the orange-trees of the South," "the balmy airs of the banks of Brenta" are brought into their discourse upon all occa-

sions. "Ah! Vania, Vania," or else "Ah! Sacha, Sacha," they say to each other in sympathetic tones, "we should live in the South! We are Greeks in soul—Greeks of the ancient world." Then they should be seen at the exhibitions standing before the pictures of certain Russian artists!—for it is pleasant to note that these gentlemen are great patriots. Now they retreat a few steps reverentially, now they advance again to the masterpiece; their little eyes have an oily lustre; "Ah, great heavens!" they exclaim at length in tones broken with the emotion they feel, "what sentiment! what sentiment! That is from the heart! What soul he has thrown into it! Yes, it overflows with sentiment! And the imagination! What imagination! 'Tis the work of a true master!" And if you could but see the pictures that decorate their houses, and the artists who come in the evening to take their places about the tea-table and listen to their conversation! Such pictures! Views of their own rooms in perspective, with screens in the foreground to the right, a little heap of dust on the shining wooden floor, a yellow samovar near the window, and farther on the master of the house himself, in a red skull-cap, with his face illuminated by a dazzling ray of sunlight! With what long-haired, scornfully smiling disciples of the muses they delight to surround themselves! What pallid, greenish-complexioned girls screech at their pianos! For it must be known that we Russians do not content ourselves with a single art—we take them all in one embrace. And it is for this reason that these gentlemen think it the proper thing to do, to take also under their protection Russian literature, more especially, dramatic literature. The "Jacob Sannazars"¹ are drawn for them; the struggle, a thousand times reproduced, of unrecognized genius against the world—against the whole universe—affects them profoundly.

The day after the arrival of Bénévolski, when tea was served in the evening, Tatiana Borissovna told her nephew to bring in his drawings.

"He draws?" exclaimed Bénévolski with a start of surprise, and he gave Androucha a look full of interest.

"Yes, to be sure, he draws," replied Tatiana Borissovna. "He has a great taste for drawing, and he has learned by

1. A wretched play by a Russian author of the name of Koukolik, who took his subjects from lives of artists.

himself, without a master." "Ah! let me see your work! Let me see your work!" said Bénévolenski. Androucha blushed, and produced his drawing-books with a smile on his lips. Bénévolenski began to examine them like a connoisseur. "Well done, young man," he said at length, "well done, very well done;" and he patted Androucha on the head, and the boy unexpectedly kissed his hand. "What talent! It's marvellous! I congratulate you, Tatiana Borissovna; I congratulate you!"

"Unfortunately, Peter Mikallovitch, we have no drawing-master, and to have one come from the city would be too expensive. Our neighbors the Artamonofs have one, it is true, but they have forbidden him to give lessons outside. They pretend it would spoil his style." "Humph!" remarked Bénévolenski, and began to cogitate with a covert glance at Androucha. "We will talk of this again," he said all at once, rubbing his hands. The next day he requested a private interview with Tatiana Borissovna, and they shut themselves up together. At the end of half an hour Androucha was called in. Bénévolenski was standing by the window; his face had a little higher color than usual and was very radiant. Tatiana Borissovna was seated in the corner wiping her eyes. "Come, Androucha," she said after a pause, "thank Peter Mikallovitch: he receives you under his patronage, and will take you with him to Petersburg." Astonishment was depicted on the face of Androucha. "Speak out boldly, young man," said Bénévolenski in an affable, patronizing tone. "Do you wish to be an artist? Do you feel that you have, as they say a vocation to be a painter?" "I want to be an artist, Peter Mikallovitch," replied Androucha in a trembling voice. "Since that is the case, I esteem myself most fortunate. It will without doubt be very hard for you to leave your worthy aunt, for whom you must cherish a feeling of the most lively gratitude."

"I adore my aunt," said Androucha hastily, lowering his eyes. "No doubt, no doubt; that can be easily imagined, and the feeling does you honor; but represent to yourself some day—the joy that your success—" "Kiss me, Androucha," said the good woman; and Androucha leaped upon her neck. "Now thank your benefactor." Androucha embraced Bénévolenski's stomach, and then by standing on tiptoe he succeeded in reaching the hand that his benefactor withdrew, it is true, but not very determinedly. It is

certainly permissible to give a child pleasure, and to afford one's self a merited satisfaction. A few days after this conversation Bénévolenski departed with his young protégé.

During the first three years of his sojourn at Petersburg Androucha wrote pretty regularly to his aunt, often enclosing with his letters specimens of his drawings. Bénévolenski would also add a few words, and seemed to be very well satisfied with his pupil. But gradually his letters became more rare, and finally they ceased altogether. For a whole year Tatiana Borissovna remained without any news of her nephew. This long silence was beginning to make her uneasy, when she received from the young man the following letter:

"MY DEAR AUNT: My patron, Peter Mikallovitch, died four days ago. A stroke of apoplexy has deprived me forever of my only support. I am just entering, it is true, upon my twentieth year. I have been at work now for seven years; I have made great progress, and I hope my talent will suffice to gain me a livelihood. I am full of courage, but you would oblige me very much, my dear aunt, if you could send me at your earliest opportunity two hundred and fifty roubles. I kiss your hands, and I am," etc., etc.

Tatiana Borissovna sent the two hundred and fifty roubles to her nephew. At the end of a month came another request for money. She collected all that she had and sent it to him. But six months had not passed before he begged her to send him money to buy colors, the Princess Terterechinof having given him an order for her portrait. Tatiana Borissovna refused to send any. "Under these circumstances," he wrote, "I must make my arrangements to go to you in order to re-establish my health in the country." And so in the following May Androucha returned to Mali-Bryki.

Tatiana Borissovna did not recognize him when he appeared before her. His letter had given her to suppose that he was thin and sickly. On the contrary he was broad-shouldered and decidedly stout, with a full red face and thick curly hair. The slight, pale Androucha was completely transformed; he was now the robust Andreï Ivanovitch Belovsorof. This metamorphosis was not confined to his exterior. The shrinking timidity, the circumspect behavior, and the neatness that distinguished him in his boyhood had given place to an insupportable impudence and a revolting untidiness. He walked with a swagger, sprawled

over the sofas, put his elbows on the table, and stretched himself and yawned unrestrainedly; and to cap all, he behaved coarsely with the servants and even with his aunt. "I am an artist," he would say, "and as free as a Cossack. That's the way with us fellows." Sometimes he would pass whole days without touching a brush. Then he would say he felt an inspiration, and would stagger about as heavily and awkwardly as a drunken man; his cheeks would become injected with blood and his eyes would grow haggard; he would begin to boast of his skill, and of the progress he made. He would say that his talent was developing from day to day—that he was pushing forward. But the fact is that nothing justified his pretensions, and the extent of his capacity was an indifferent portrait. His ignorance was dense. He had read nothing, and asserted that an artist had no need to read. Nature, freedom, poetry—these, according to him, constituted his element. To shake his thick locks, to sing from morning till night, to inhale voluptuously the smoke of his cigarettes—such were the noble recreations in which he strove to excel. But these Russian eccentricities do not sit well on every one, and Poléjafefs at second hand are repulsive. However this may be, our artist installed himself at his aunt's, and it no doubt struck him as being a very comfortable arrangement to live at her expense. Her visitors, nevertheless, had no reason to congratulate themselves, for he was insupportable to them. Seated before the piano (Tatiana Borissovna had indulged herself in buying one some time before), he would begin to play with one finger "*La Troika rapide.*" Then he would pick out chords, and pass hours together singing in a shrill discordant voice some of Varlamof's songs, such as "The solitary pine," or "No, doctor, don't you come;" and while he sang his puffy fat cheeks would be stretched as taut as a drum-head. Sometimes he would suddenly break forth in his ear-piercing voice with "Be still, mad passion!" Tatiana Borissovna would tremble at such unexpected explosions.

"The songs that are written nowadays," she remarked to me one day, "surprise me very much. One would think that lost souls were singing. In my day it was very different. There was no exaggeration in the saddest songs, and it was a pleasure to listen to them. Now, for instance, here is one that I remember :

“Come to me in the prairie, love,
 Where I waiting lie;
 Come to me in the prairie, love,
 Where I weep and sigh;
 Nor tarry longer,—to the prairie, love,
 Hasten, hasten, ere I die!”

And Tatiana Borissovna smiled mischievously.

“I su-u-uffer! I su-u-uffer!” bellowed her nephew in the next room.

“Now do be quiet, Androucha.”

“My heart is broken because thou hast left me,” continued the unflagging songster.

Tatiana Borissovna shook her head.

“Oh, these artists! What martyrdom!”

A year has passed since then. Belovsorof is still at his aunt's, but perpetually on the eve of going back to St. Petersburg. He has grown to be broader than he is long. His aunt, strange to relate, adores him, and all the young women of the neighborhood idolize him.

Most of Tatiana Borissovna's former friends have stopped going to her house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DISTRICT DOCTOR.

ONE day late in autumn as I was returning from shooting I caught cold and fell ill. Luckily the fever seized me when I happened to be at an inn in one of the towns of the district. I sent for a doctor. In about half an hour the doctor of the district appeared. He was a little, dark, insignificant-looking man. He prescribed the customary sudorifics and a mustard-plaster, quickly pocketed the five-rouble note that I gave him, giving a little dry cough and looking away from me as he did so, and was preparing to depart, when some remark was made that caused him to turn back and begin to talk. I was shaking with the fever, and as I foresaw that I could not sleep I asked for nothing better than a chat with this worthy man. Tea was served, and my doctor became still more communicative. He was a fellow of some wit; he talked easily, and his conversation was amusing. Man is a strange creature. Often one may live with a person on terms of intimacy without ever once opening his heart; at other times upon the slightest acquaintance a mutual and most sincere exchange of confidences takes place. I don't know to what I was indebted for the confidence of my new friend, but he related to me point-blank a rather curious adventure, that I am going to give my readers as nearly as possible in the words of the narrator.

"You have not the pleasure of knowing," he began in a weak quavering voice (the usual effect of Bérézof snuff when used unmixed)—"you do not know Pavel Loukitch Mylof, the judge of this district? Well, no matter." He coughed and wiped his eyes. "This is the fact; it happened, to be exact, in the middle of Lent, in the midst of a thaw. I was at his (the judge's) house; we were playing a game of *préférence*. The judge is a worthy man and plays an excellent game. All at once" (this was a favorite expression of the doctor's) "some one came and said to me, 'There's a servant asking for you.' 'What does he want?' I replied. 'He has a let-

ter—from a patient, no doubt.’ ‘Bring me the letter.’ It proved indeed to be from a patient. Good! that is our livelihood, as you know. This is how it was: the letter was from a widow; it said this: ‘My daughter is dying; in heaven’s name, come. I have sent my carriage for you.’ So far there was nothing strange. But figure to yourself that she lived twenty verstes away; that it was night, and that the roads were horrible. Then she was poor; I could not expect to get more than two silver roubles, and even that was doubtful. It was more probable that she would pay me in linen or oat-meal. However, you know duty is first of all: a dying woman was calling me to her. I gave my hand at cards to Kalleopine, a member of the tribunal, and hastened to my house. At my door I found a little *téléga* drawn by two very fat farm-horses with hair as thick as felt, and driven by a coachman who, out of respect for me, sat on the box with his head uncovered. ‘Well,’ thought I to myself, ‘it doesn’t look, brother, as if your masters rolled in money!’ You may smile; but we poor devils are very observing. Let a coachman sit on his box like a prince; let him keep his cap on, and giggle, and play with his whip: then we can count confidently upon two bank-bills. But in the present case there was no prospect of that sort. However, I repeat it, duty is duty. I secure the most necessary remedies, and we are off.

“It was with great difficulty that we made our way. The road was horrible; what with snow, water, mud, gullies, and even a broken dike—it was simply infernal. However, at last we are there! I see a little thatched house; there are lights in the windows. They expect me without doubt. A respectable-looking old woman in a cap comes out to meet me. ‘Save her,’ she exclaims, ‘the poor child is dying!’ I reply, ‘Don’t be alarmed; where is the patient?’ ‘This way; come.’ I look: I see a small chamber very tidy; a bed upon which is lying, in an unconscious state, a girl of about twenty, consumed by a fever and breathing with effort, and on either side of her two other young women, her sisters, weeping and in the depth of despair. ‘Yesterday she was very well,’ they said, ‘and eat with an appetite. This morning she complained of a headache, and you see what a condition she is in now!’ It was a burning fever. ‘Calm yourselves,’ I repeated; we doctors, you know—it is our duty. I went up to the bed. I bled her, ordered a mustard-plaster to be applied, and prescribed a potion. As I

gave these orders I kept my eyes fixed upon her ; I did this, I ought to say, because I had never before seen such a face ; she was, in a word, a beauty. I was greatly moved. What a pity ! a face so lovely ! such eyes ! But, thanks be to God, she becomes more easy ; her skin becomes more moist ; she seems to recover her consciousness ; she casts her eyes about her ; she smiles, and puts her hand to her face. Her sisters bend over her and ask, 'Are you in pain?' 'No,' she replies, turning away. I look at her: she sleeps. 'Now,' I said, 'we must let her be quiet.' We go out of the room on the tips of our toes, leaving with her only a maid in case of need. A samovar and a bottle of Jamaica await us in the sitting-room. In our profession it is impossible to get along without that. Tea is served for me, and then they beg me to pass the night there. I consent. How could I leave at such a time? The old lady moans incessantly. 'What is the matter?' I say to her. 'She will live ; don't worry. You had much better go to bed ; it is nearly three o'clock.' 'Will you have me called if anything happens?' 'I promise you ; I promise you.' She went out, and the two sisters followed her. A bed was arranged for me in the sitting-room. I lay down, but it was impossible to sleep. What was the meaning of it? certainly it was not for want of fatigue! I could not get my thoughts off the patient. At last, not being able to stand it longer, I made up my mind to get up. 'Let us see,' I said to myself, 'how the patient is getting on.' I got up and opened the door softly, with a beating heart. I looked in : the maid was fast asleep, with her mouth wide open ; she was actually snoring, the brute. The face of the sick girl was turned towards me and her arms were open, poor thing. All at once she opened her eyes and looked at me. 'Who are you? who are you?' I was confused. 'Don't be alarmed, mademoiselle,' I said; 'I am the doctor, come to see how you are.' 'You, the doctor?' 'Yes; your mother sent to town for me. We have bled you, mademoiselle. Please try to sleep now, and in two or three days we shall have you on your feet again, by the grace of God.' 'Yes, yes, doctor ; don't let me die, I beseech, I beseech you.' 'Why do you say that? may God forgive you!' 'The fever cannot have left her,' I said to myself. 'I must try her pulse.' I was not mistaken. She watched me, and all at once seized my hand. 'I must tell you why I don't want to die ; I must tell you, I must tell you. We are alone now ; but you

will promise me faithfully not to confide— Listen—' I bent over her. She put her lips to my ear; her hair touched my cheek. I confess I began to lose my head myself. She began to mumble incoherently; I could make out absolutely nothing. 'Ah,' I thought, 'it is delirium.' She kept on talking very rapidly and, as it seemed to me, in a strange tongue. At last she stopped, trembled, let her head fall back upon the pillow, and shook her finger at me. 'You understand, doctor; keep my secret faithfully. He died long ago, poor fellow! and the infant too.' I quieted her as well as I could. I made her drink, and then after waking up the maid I left the room."

The doctor took another vigorous pinch of snuff, and remained for a few moments as if he had been petrified.

"However," he continued, "contrary to my expectation, the patient was no better in the morning. Upon reflection I decided to remain, although other patients had need of my services. Nevertheless, you know that there must be no negligence: it hurts practice. But, in the first place, the patient was really in a critical condition; in the second place, I confess she interested me greatly. Besides, the other members of this family attracted me. Their father was a man of learning, a writer. He died in poverty, I agree; but he had had time to give his children an excellent education. He had also left them a great many books. I don't know whether it was because I was devoted to my patient, or for other reasons, but I can say that I was very soon treated in this house like a relative. In the midst of all this, the roads became absolutely impassable! Communications were, if I may use the expression, entirely interrupted. No way could be devised to get medicines from the town. The patient did not improve; her condition grew worse day by day. But now—I must tell you—" (the doctor hesitated). "I really don't know how to begin—" (here the doctor took another pinch of snuff, coughed, and took a swallow of tea). "I will tell you very frankly that my patient—how shall I say it?—fell in love with me—or rather, no! she didn't exactly fall in love with me— Listen—how shall I express it?—" (the doctor cast his eyes down, and turned red).

"No," he resumed with vivacity, "what did I say? One must do one's self justice. She was a sensible, well-educated girl. She had read a great deal; and I have even forgotten my Latinity. I no longer know a word of it. As to my

face" (the doctor looked at himself, with a pitying smile), "I haven't much to boast of in that regard either. However, I am not entirely a fool, thank Heaven! I don't take black for white. I even observe a great many things. This, for example: I understand very well that Alexandra Andrevna (that was the name of my patient) did not have a feeling of love for me, but rather one of friendliness, or, better still, a sort of esteem. Although, perhaps, she did not appreciate it herself, her position was such that in truth you will recognize it as I do. But for that matter," continued the doctor, who had uttered all these words without taking breath, and with visible embarrassment, "it seems to me that I am a little mixed. If I continue in this way, you will not get much of an idea of matters. I must put a little more order into my story."

He emptied his glass of tea, and resumed calmly:

"So then my patient went from bad to worse,—from bad to worse. You are not a physician, my dear sir, and you cannot know what a physician undergoes, especially during the first moments after he recognizes the fact that the disease is getting the upper hand. What becomes of his assurance? He is actually stunned. It seems as if he had forgotten everything; as if the patient had no longer any confidence in him; as if the persons about suspected that all was going wrong and reported the symptoms with a bad grace; and as if they looked askance and whispered among themselves. Ah, what a situation! There must be medicines that will cure the disease; the question is to find them. 'Let us think: isn't it that one?' It is tried. 'No, that's not it.' The medicines are not even given time to act. First one is tried in despair, and then another. There is the formulary, and it is consulted incessantly, but without result. The temptation is strong to open it at hazard. But meanwhile the patient is dying. 'Another doctor may save him, perhaps,' they say. Quick, a consultation,—my responsibility will be relieved. But what a foolish figure the doctor cuts as he says this. In time he becomes habituated to everything, it is true. If the patient dies, the doctor is not to blame for it, if he has treated him according to rule. Sometimes there is another source of trouble for the physician; it is the blind confidence that is sometimes placed in him in a case that he feels is hopeless. That was the present case; the entire family of Alexandra Andrevna had perfect confidence in my skill, and never suspected the danger that the

patient was in. I kept up this illusion, although my heart was in my boots. To crown the misfortune, the roads became so bad that it took whole days for the coachman to go to town for medicine. I never left my patient's room; I could not tear myself away. I told her amusing stories, I played cards with her, and in short I did everything to divert her. I passed the nights by her pillow. The old lady would thank me with tears in her eyes; but I would always reply, 'I don't deserve your gratitude.' I must confess to you—I may certainly speak of it now—I had fallen in love with my patient. And she was attached to me, too. I was the only person she permitted to enter her room. She would enter into conversation with me and ask me where I had studied, how I lived, who my relatives were, and who my friends. I knew that these conversations were bad for her, but yet I felt that I had not the courage to forbid them. I would take my head in my two hands and say to myself, 'What are you doing, wretch that you are?' Sometimes she would take my hand and gaze at me a long, long time; then she would turn away with a sigh and say, 'How good you are!' Her hands would be burning, her eyes wide open but languid. 'Yes,' she would continue, 'you are good; you are a worthy man; you are not at all like our neighbors; you are not like him. Why was it that I did not know you sooner?' 'Alexandra Andrevna,' I would say, 'calm yourself; I appreciate it, be assured of that,—you may rest assured of that. I am truly overwhelmed; but in God's name calm yourself; all will yet be well, you will recover.' But it is well to say," added the little doctor, raising his eyebrows and bending towards me, "that if the family had little to do with the neighboring proprietors, it was because the small ones were beneath them, while pride kept them away from the richer ones. They were, I repeat, very refined people, so that you must understand that I felt extremely flattered. She would take her medicine from no one but me. She would raise herself with my help, poor thing, swallow the draught, and look at me. I would be completely upset.

"However, her condition grew constantly worse. 'She will die,' I said to myself. 'She will die for sure.' This thought drove me wild. I would have been ready to take her place in the coffin. Her mother and her sisters were then watching me, looking me straight in the face. Already I began to inspire them with less confidence. 'How is she getting on?' 'Comfortably, comfortably.' That 'comfort-

ably' was a famous word; I was losing my wits with it. One night I was sitting alone by the patient as usual. The maid was there, but she was sleeping like a top; but she could not be blamed for that, for she was completely used up. As to Alexandra Andrevna, she had been feeling very badly all the evening; the fever had worn her out. Until midnight she had been very restless. It seemed to me that she had at last fallen asleep; at all events, she no longer moved, but lay very still. A lamp burned in the corner before the images. I was sitting with my head down, dozing, when all at once I felt some one touching me. I turned. Great God! Alexandra Andrevna had her great eyes fixed upon me, her lips were parted, and her cheeks were on fire. 'What's the matter?' 'Doctor, I am going to die, am I not?' 'What could put such a thought into your head?' 'No, doctor, I beg you not to tell me I am going to live; don't tell me that! If you know— Listen, I implore you; don't conceal my condition from me!' She was all out of breath, 'If I were sure of dying, I would tell you all.' "Alexandra Andrevna, calm yourself." 'Listen, then. I have not been sleeping, but I have been watching you for a long time. In the name of Heaven— I have confidence in you; yes, you are a worthy man, an honest man. I beseech you, by all that is most sacred in the world, tell me the truth! If you only knew how important it was for me to know it! Doctor, in the name of God, tell me if I am in danger?' 'What do you want me to say, Alexandra Andrevna?' 'I implore you, speak!' 'I do not wish to conceal from you, Alexandra Andrevna, that your condition is critical but with God's help—' 'I shall die, I shall die!' She seemed overjoyed, and her face lighted up. I was frightened. 'Oh, have no fear, have no fear death does not terrify me.' She raised herself quickly, and leaned upon her elbow. 'Now, yes, now I can tell you that I am full of gratitude; that you are a worthy, an excellent man, and that I love you.' I looked at her in amazement, dumbfounded. 'Do you understand? I love you!' 'Alexandra Andrevna, how have I deserved this?' 'No, no, you don't understand me, you don't understand me!' And all at once she stretched out her hands, seized my head, and kissed me. You can imagine that I almost uttered an exclamation of joy. I fell upon my knees and hid my face in the pillows. She was silent; but she passed her fingers through my hair and wept. I understood her. I began to console and reassure her. I

can hardly tell what I said at that moment. 'You will wake the maid,' I said at last, 'Alexandra Andrevna, be sure; calm yourself.' 'Come, say no more,' she replied. 'May the good God bless them all! Let them wake; let them come: it will make no difference; I must die. And you? What have you to fear? Lift up your head, then. But perhaps you do not love me; perhaps I am deceived. If it is so, I beg your pardon.' 'Alexandra Andrevna, why do you say that? I love too.' She looked at me fixedly. 'Then come, embrace me!' To tell the truth, I don't know why I did not go mad that night. I felt the patient was nearing her end! I saw that she was slightly delirious; I even comprehended that if she had not known she was in danger of dying she would not have dreamed of me. But it is a sad thing to die at twenty-five without having loved. That is what tormented her; that is why in her despair she had chosen me. Do you understand? However, she kept me in her arms. 'Have pity on me, Alexandra Andrevna, and on yourself, I beseech you!' 'Why?' she replied. 'Why should I spare myself? I am going to die!' She repeated these last words over and over again. 'Ah, if I knew that I was going to live, and take my place in the world again as the daughter of a gentleman, I should have blushed,—yes, I should have been ashamed. But in the condition I am in, what is the use?' 'But who told you you were going to die?' 'Come, put an end to that! You will not deceive me; you can't lie: look at yourself.' 'You shall live, Alexandra Andrevna; I will cure you. We will ask your mother's blessing. We will marry, we will be happy.' 'No, no; I have your word. I must die. You have promised me so; you have said so!' I was profoundly moved, and that for many reasons. What singular combinations of circumstances sometimes present themselves! They look like nothing, but they make one suffer. She took a fancy to know my Christian name. I must tell you that, to my great misfortune, I have a very common name. I am called Trifone; yes, Trifone Ivanitch. Every one in the house called me 'doctor.' So then I was obliged to tell her, My name is Trifone, mademoiselle.' She frowned, shook her head, and muttered something in French—nothing pleasant for me to hear, I am sure. Then she laughed, with a laugh that was not pleasant for me either. In this way I passed almost the whole night with her. Ah, that night! I shall

remember it until my dying day; It is burnt into my heart, that night!

"When I left the room the next morning, I reeled like a drunken man. It was only late in the day after tea that I came to. Great God! she was past recognition; a dead person could be no more frightful to look at. I swear to you, upon my honor, that I do not understand now how I bore up under such torture. My patient dragged on at the point of death for three days and three nights; and such nights! What did she not say to me! The last night I was seated by her, praying to God. 'Take her to you quickly,' I was saying, 'and take me with her,' when all at once her aged mother appeared. I had already warned her the previous evening that there was little hope, and that a priest had better be summoned. The patient, when she saw her mother, said, 'You have done well to come. Look at us two! We love each other, and we have given ourselves to each other.' 'What does she say, doctor? What does she mean?' I was as it were petrified. 'She is wandering,' I answered; 'it is the fever.' But she stopped me short. 'Why do you say that?' she exclaimed. You told me just the contrary a moment ago, and you have accepted my ring. Why not confess? My mother is kind; she will pardon us, she will understand it; and you know I'm dying. I have no need to lie. Give me your hand.' I got up and ran out of the room. The old lady understood it all, as you may imagine. But I will not weary you further; besides I confess it is very painful for me to recur to those heart-breaking scenes. My patient died the next day. May God receive her soul!" (The doctor uttered these last words hastily and sighed.) "Before she breathed her last, she begged her family to retire and leave me alone with her. 'Forgive me,' she said; 'I am perhaps to blame in your eyes. The fever—' But I swear to you, I have never loved any one as much as I love you. Don't forget me—keep my ring—"

The doctor turned away; I grasped his hand.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "let us talk of something else. Don't you want to take a hand at *préférence*? It is not becoming in us doctors to let such feelings run away with us. We must content ourselves with one thing; that is to prevent the children from crying, and the mother from scolding at us. I ought to say to you that I have since, as they say, entered into lawful wedlock. Yes, I have indeed

married the daughter of a merchant with seven thousand roubles for a dowry. Her name is Akoulina, and that name goes well with Trifone. She is not a very pleasant creature, but luckily she passes most of the time in sleeping. Well, shall we begin our *préférence*?"

We began to play *préférence* at a kopek a point. Trifone Ivanitch won two roubles¹ and a half, and left late in the evening very proud of his victory.

1. Formerly the current money in Russia consisted of paper roubles of one hundred kopeks, and worth about twenty-two cents. Now the monetary unit is the silver rouble. It is worth about eighty cents.

CHAPTER XIX.

KACIANE.¹

I WAS returning from a day's shooting in a jolting *téléga*, and feeling overcome by the suffocating heat of a cloudy summer's day. (It is well known that when the sky is overcast the heat is sometimes more insupportable than when the sun is out, especially when there is no wind.) I was dozing, having abandoned myself with a gloomy resignation to the jolting of the *téléga*, whose dry creaking wheels raised over the beaten road a fine white dust that never left it, when my attention was suddenly aroused by the extraordinary uneasiness of the driver, who up to this time had been sleeping even more profoundly than I had. We were passing through a vast ploughed plain. Little hillocks with sloping flanks that the plough had not respected formed long undulations. The eye could not take in more than five verstes at the most. Not a house was in sight. A few clumps of birch-trees with their rounded and irregular tops broke the horizon that extended before us. Narrow paths ran through the fields, lost themselves in the hollows, and wound over the hillocks. One of these paths joined the road about five hundred feet ahead of us, and on it I discovered some kind of a procession. It was this that was attracting the attention of my driver.

I soon made out that it was a funeral. In front, in a *téléga* slowly drawn by a horse, was a priest, and at his side was seated the subdeacon, holding the reins. Behind came four peasants with heads uncovered, bearing a coffin covered with a white pall. Two women followed the coffin. The feeble and plaintive voice of one of them reached my ears. I listened. She was chanting a dirge, and the droning,

1. The author represents under this name a sectary; and if he does not call him so, it is because of the censorship. The number of sectaries is estimated to amount to at least 13,000,000. They form the most intelligent as well as the most moral part of the community.

monotonous sound, the expression of a sorrow without hope, spread sadly over the deserted fields. My driver whipped up his horses: he wished to get ahead of the procession, for it is considered unlucky to meet a corpse. He succeeded in passing the point where the path that the funeral was traversing struck the highway; but he had not gone a hundred feet beyond it, when a violent jolt shook the *téléga*, which tipped so as almost to throw us out. The driver reined in his horses that had not stopped, made a gesture with his hand, and spit on the ground.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

While replying he descended leisurely from his seat.

"What has happened?"

"The axle is broken," he replied gloomily, and began to arrange the collar of one of the horses with such roughness that the poor beast was almost thrown on its side; but it recovered its balance, snorted, gave a shake, and began quietly to scratch its leg below the knee with its teeth.

I got down and stood some minutes in the road in great perplexity. The wheel was almost entirely bent in under the *téléga*, and seemed to turn up its hub with a sort of mute despair.

"What are we going to do?" I said at length to the driver.

"There is what brought us the ill-luck," he replied, pointing with his whip at the funeral procession, that had had time to reach the high-road and was coming towards us. "I have always remarked that," he continued, "it is a very true saying: when one meets a corpse—yes."

Then he began to torment the leader again, who, seeing that he was in a decidedly bad humor, determined to keep perfectly still, and contented himself with modestly switching his tail from time to time. I walked round the *téléga* and stopped again before the wheel.

Meanwhile the sad procession had come up with us. Slowly turning to the right upon the road, it passed slowly by us. My driver and myself both removed our hats. We exchanged a bow with the priest and a look with the bearers.

They proceeded with difficulty, and their deep chests heaved with the effort. One of the peasant-women that followed the bier was very old and pale. Her motionless features, cruelly ravaged by grief, preserved an expression of dignity that was at once severe and imposing. She walked

along in silence, every now and then putting her wasted hand to her thin shrunken lips. The other was a young woman of not more than five-and-twenty; her eyes were red and wet with tears, and her face was swollen from weeping. When she was near us she stopped her dirge, and covered her face with her sleeve. When the procession had passed us and regained the middle of the road, her plaintive, heart-rending chant arose afresh. My driver followed the swaying of the coffin with his eyes for some time in silence, and then turning towards me he said,

"It is the carpenter Martine that they are burying there. The one that lived at Riabafa."

"How do you know?"

"I recognized the women. The old one is his mother, and the young one his wife."

"Did he die of disease?"

"Yes, of a burning fever. It was three days ago that the steward sent for the doctor, but did not find him at home. Martine was a good carpenter; he rather liked to crook his elbow, but he was a good carpenter. How his wife mourns! But for that matter it is always the same thing: women don't buy their tears; women's tears are all of the same water. So."

After delivering himself of this reflection, he stooped, passed under the trace by which the leader was attached to the shaft, and seized the douga with both hands.

"But then," I continued, "what are we to do?"

The driver placed his knee against the shoulder of the shaft-horse, shook the douga two or three times, and tightened the harness. Then he came out again under the traces, gave the leader a blow on the nose, approached the wheel, and, without taking his eyes from it, drew slowly out from under the skirts of his kaftan a bark snuff-box, slowly lifted the cover by the bit of leather fixed to it, slowly thrust his great thumb and forefinger into the snuff-box (they could scarcely get in), rolled over and over between his fingers the snuff that he took out, turned his nose up, and then began to stuff it with snuff several times in succession, accompanying each snuff with a prolonged sigh. This operation terminated, he smiled significantly, winked his eyes that were filled with tears, and remained absorbed in a profound meditation.

"Well?" I said at last.

The driver put his snuff-box back into his pocket, moved

his hat down over his eyes, without using his hands, by a movement of his head, and got up again into his seat.

"Where are you going?" I asked in surprise.

"Please to get in," he answered tranquilly, taking up the reins.

"But how are you going to go on?"

"We shall go on."

"But the axle?"

"Please to get in."

"But the axle is broken!"

"Yes; it is certainly broken; but we will be able to reach the next hamlet—at a walk, of course. The first houses are yonder, at the right, behind the wood. It is called Joudino."

"Do you think we can get there?"

The driver did not deign to reply.

"I had rather walk," I said.

"As you wish."

He cracked his whip, and the horses started.

We succeeded in reaching the hamlet, although the right forward wheel scarcely held, and turned in a curious fashion. It all but came off as we were going down a little hill; but my driver apostrophized it with a rough voice, and we arrived without further mishap. The village of Joudino consisted of six small isbas that had begun to settle, although they had probably been built but a short time. All the yards were not yet enclosed by hedges. As we entered the hamlet we did not meet a human being; there were not even any hens in the street. A black dog with a short tail slunk hastily away from a dry trough to which he had probably been attracted by thirst, and at once, without uttering a growl, crawled under a gate. I went up to the nearest isba, and, opening the door that led into the yard a crack, I called for the owner of the house. No one responded. I called a second time. The mewing of a cat was heard behind the door of the isba. I pushed the door open with my foot, and a half-starved cat rushed out between my legs, with its green eyes glistening in the darkness. I put my head into the room: it was dark, smoky, and deserted. I went back to the yard, but there was no one to be found there either. A calf lowed behind a hurdle, and a gray goose waddled off. I went into the next isba and found it equally deserted. I went into the yard.

There, in the very middle of the yard, in the full glare of

the sun, there was lying with his face to the ground, and his head covered with an *armiak*, a human being whom I took for a boy. A few steps from him, under a thatched shed, beside a wretched *téléga*, stood a little, thin horse, in a harness all pieced together. The rays of the sun that came through the chinks of the dilapidated roof mottled its shaggy coat of light bay with little luminous spots. Near by, in an elevated bird-house, some starlings chattered, and watched me from the height of their aerial home with a peaceable curiosity. I approached the sleeper and tried to arouse him.

He raised his head, and as soon as he saw me he leaped to his feet.

"What do you want? What is it?" he muttered, still half asleep.

I was so surprised by his exterior that at first I did not reply. Imagine a dwarf of about fifty, with a little tanned, wrinkled face, a pointed nose, little brown eyes scarcely visible, and black woolly hair that spread out like the crown of a mushroom over his little head. His whole body was thin and wrinkled, and his expression was such that I cannot describe it.

"What do you want?" he said again.

I explained what brought me there. He listened without turning away from me for a moment his strangely winking eyes.

"Can't I procure a new axle here?" I said at last. "I will pay for it with pleasure."

"But who are you? A hunter?" he replied, eying me from head to foot.

"Yes, I am a hunter."

"Ah! you kill the birds of the good God, and the beasts of the forest. And do you think that to kill the birds of heaven and to shed innocent blood is no sin?"

The little old man drawled out his words, but his voice surprised me no less than his appearance. Not only was it not broken at all, but it possessed even great sweetness; it was young and almost as tender as the voice of a woman.

"I have no axle," he said after a moment's silence; "that one isn't good for anything," he said pointing to his own *téléga*, "for your *téléga* must be a large one."

"But can't I find one in the village?"

"In the village, do you say? Nobody there has one;

besides there is nobody at home. Everybody is at work. Go away," he concluded suddenly, and lay down again.

I was not prepared for such an ending.

"Listen, my good man," I said to him, putting my hand on his shoulder, "do me a kindness. Help me out of this embarrassment."

"Go away and God be with you! I am tired; I have been to town," he said, covering his head with his *armiak*.

"Come, do me this favor. I will pay you."

"I don't need your money."

"I beg you, my good fellow!"

He raised himself, and sat with his little spindle-legs crossed.

"I can certainly take you to the clearing. Some traders have bought a wood yonder. May God be their judge! they are felling the trees, and have built a shop there. May God be their judge! there you may be able to give orders for an axle, or to buy one ready-made."

"That's the thing!" I exclaimed joyfully. "That's the very thing! Come on!"

"An oaken axle, a good axle," he continued without stirring.

"And this clearing, is it far from here?"

"Three *verstes*."

"Good! Can we go there in your *téléga*?"

"Certainly not!"

"Come, come, old man," I said, "my driver is waiting for us in the street."

The old man rose with considerable reluctance and followed me into the street. My driver was in very bad humor. He had been to water his horses, but the wells were almost dry and the water had a very bad taste. Hence his ill-temper. Water is, according to drivers, the essential thing. However, at the sight of the old man he was somewhat mollified, and nodding to him he said,

"Ah, *Kacianouchka*, good-day!"

"Good-day to you, *Erofel*, good-day to the just man," responded *Kaciane* in a doleful tone.

I communicated to driver the old man's proposition. *Erofel* approved of it, and went into the yard. While he unharnessed the horses with a sage deliberation, *Kaciane* stood with his back against the gate, watching the driver and myself with a sorrowful air. He seemed to be very un-

easy, and I thought I noticed that our unexpected visit was not at all agreeable to him.

"You have been transported too, then?" said Erofei to him all at once, lifting the douga.

"Yes."

"Indeed," said my driver between his teeth, "you of course know Martine the carpenter? You know Martine of Riabaia?"

"I know him."

"Well, he is dead. We have just met the funeral."

Kaciane shuddered.

"Dead?" he replied, and bowed his head.

"Yes, he's dead. How is it that you didn't cure him? They say you practise medicine. You are a sort of a healer."

The driver was evidently bantering the old man.

"Is that your téléga?" he said, indicating the vehicle with his shoulder.

"Yes, that's mine."

"It's a famous one, truly;" and taking the shafts with both hands he almost turned it bottom side up. "You call that a téléga! and what shall we go to the clearing in? Our wheel-horse can never get into that. Our horses are strong; but what sort of a thing is this, any way?"

"I really don't know how we shall go," replied Kaciane, "unless we take that little beast there," he added, pointing to his horse with a sigh.

"That thing!" interrupted Erofei, and, going up to the poor old hack, he put the middle finger of his right hand upon its neck, and gave it a scornful push. "See there," he added, "the crow is asleep."

I begged Erofei to harness it in as quickly as possible. I was impatient to be on the way to the wood with Kaciane, for grouse are often found in the clearings. When the téléga was ready I arranged myself and my dog as comfortably as possible upon the linden bark that was in it, while Kaciane rolled himself up almost into a ball in front of me. He continued to look very sad. We were just about to start, when Erofei came up to me, and whispered in my ear with a look of mystery,

"You do well, father, to go with him. He is a—what shall I say?—a kind of innocent, and he is called 'The Flea.' I don't know how you have understood him."

I was about to reply that, so far, Kaciane had seemed to

me to be a very rational person ; but he began again, still in a whisper :

"Only see that he drives you where he has said he would. Pick out the axle yourself. Get a good, solid one. I say, Flea," he added, raising his voice, "can I find a bit of bread in your house?"

"Look; perhaps you will find some," replied Kaciane. He gathered up the reins, and we set out.

To my great surprise, his little horse did very well. During the whole way Kaciane preserved an obstinate silence. When he replied to a question, he did so shortly and with a bad grace. We soon reached the clearing, and went into the store. It was in an isolated isba on the edge of a ravine that had been transformed into a pond by means of a temporary dam. I found in the store two young clerks, with teeth as white as snow, soft-looking eyes, lively and insinuating tongues, and knowing smiles. I bought an axle of them and returned to the clearing. I thought that Kaciane would wait there for me with the *téléga*. But he suddenly came up and said,

"You are going to shoot birds, are you not?"

"Yes, if I can find any."

"I will go with you. Will you let me?"

"Certainly."

We entered the clearing. It was about a *verste* in length. I confess I was more occupied with Kaciane than with my dog. It was not without cause that he had been surnamed "The Flea." His bare black head (his thick hair could very well take the place of any head-gear) would disappear in the bushes and suddenly reappear a little farther on. He walked very rapidly with a skip, so to speak, and he stooped every moment to pick some herb or other which he thrust into his bosom, all the while muttering something between his teeth, and watching me as well as my dog with an inquisitive, distrustful look. There is often found in the coppices and glades a small bird of a gray plumage, that continually flits whistling and diving from bush to bush. Kaciane would imitate them, answering them and calling them. A young quail started up under his feet, uttering its cry. Kaciane imitated it as he followed its flight with his eyes. A lark came down beside him, beating its wings and singing its loudest; Kaciane repeated the song. But he did not address a word to me.

Meanwhile the day had become magnificently clear; but

the heat had not grown less. A few clouds, high up and of the creamy white of snow that falls late in spring, sailed through the serene heavens, flat and long like reefed sails. Their jagged edges would change slowly but distinctly, until they melted, so to speak, into the air and no longer cast and shadow. We remained a long time with Kaciane in the thicket. Young sprouts scarcely a yard high with thin smooth stems surrounded the old blackened stumps, covered with those rough excrescences with gray edges of which match-wood is made. Strawberry-plants with their little red tendrils covered their tops. Whole families of mushrooms, burned and whitened by the sun, surrounded them. My feet were constantly entangled in the high grass. The foliage, still tender and reddish, shone with a metallic lustre that dazzled my eyes. The earth was studded with flowers. There were the blue harebell, the little yellow buttercup, and the rosy petals of the celadine. Here and there by the side of the unfrequented ways where the track of the *télégas* was marked only by narrow bands of a fine reddish grass, were square piles of wood, and the slanting squares made by the light shadows they cast were the only spots protected from the sun's rays. At moments an almost imperceptible breeze would now and then die away almost as quickly as it came. It would suddenly fan my face gently with its breath, and everything would rustle merrily and seem to become animated about. The flexible palm-like leaves of the ferns would sway gracefully. Then the wind would die away, and all would become silent again. The crickets alone chanted in chorus with a sort of fury and tired me with their dry, sharp, and continued chirp. It is a fit accompaniment to the persistent heat of mid-day; it seems almost as if it were created and called from the glowing entrails of the earth by it.

After walking some time without flushing a single bird, we at last came to another clearing. Here the recently felled aspens lay melancholily upon the ground, crushing the grass and bushes beneath them. There were some of them still covered with green leaves, but they were dead and hung limp and withered from the motionless branches. There were others whose leaves were already dried and shrivelled. The fresh yellow chips, which lay in heaps under the felled trunks that were still full of sap, diffused a pungent but agreeable odor; farther on, near the woods, resounded the dull blows of the axe, and from time to time a tufted tree

would sink slowly and majestically, as if it spread its arms and bowed.

I was a long time without coming across any game, but at last a corn-crake sprang from a thick clump of oak bushes. I fired: the crake pirouetted in the air and fell. At the report of the gun, Kaciane clapped his hands to his face, and stood motionless, while I reloaded and picked up the bird. When I started on again, he went to the spot where the crake had fallen, and, bending over the grass that was stained with a few drops of blood, he shook his head, and looked at me timidly. I heard him say then in a low voice, "It's a sin; yes, it's a sin!"

The heat finally forced us to take refuge in the woods. I threw myself down under a thick clump of hazel above which a young plane-tree graciously spread its light branches. Kaciane seated himself upon the butt of a fallen birch, while I watched him. The tops of the trees moved gently, and the slightly greenish shadow of their foliage passed slowly to and fro over his wretched body, enveloped after a fashion in a dark *armiak*. He did not lift his head. At length, tired of his silence, I stretched out on my back and amused myself by contemplating the peaceful play of the leaves which crossed each other in every direction and stood out against the clear vault of the sky.

No occupation is pleasanter than this. An immense ocean seems to spread overhead. The trees seem not to rise from the earth, but like roots of immense plants to descend vertically and plunge into waves as clear as crystal. The foliage has in places the brilliancy of the emerald; in others it is thicker, and has a shade of velvety green that is almost black. Somewhere very far in the distance, at the extremity of a tapering branch, is a solitary leaf, motionless against a patch of blue. Near it is another that waves, and recalls the play of a fish's fin by a movement that seems spontaneous and not caused by the wind. Little islands of round white clouds float in the air above. But suddenly this immense sea, this radiant ether, these branches, these empurpled leaves, all are in motion, and trembling with a fugitive sheen; a fresh, tremulous murmur, like the continuous plashing of the waves rolling up on the beach, strikes upon the ear. You do not stir; you gaze, and it is impossible to describe the sweet, soft feeling of joy that fills your heart. You gaze on. The clear depth of azure brings to the lips a smile as pure as itself; memories of happiness pass through

the mind like these flaky clouds that follow each other in gentle succession. The vision seems to penetrate ever onward, and to draw you after it into this abyss at once dazzling and tranquil.

"Master, master," said Kaciane suddenly, in his sonorous voice.

I started up in surprise. Before that he had scarcely replied to my questions, and now he was beginning the conversation.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Why did you kill that bird?" he said, looking intently at me.

"Eh! why? The crake—it is game. It is good to eat."

"It wasn't for that that you killed it, master—to eat it? Oh, no, you killed it for amusement."

"But you yourself certainly eat, I suppose, geese and chickens."

"Those are birds that God has made for man. But the crake is a wild bird—a bird of the woods. And that is not the only one. There are many other creatures in the woods, the streams, the fields, the meadows, and the marshes, on the earth and in the air, and it is a sin to kill them. Let them live on earth for their allotted term. Another food is provided for man; another food and another drink—corn, the gift of God, and the water of heaven, and the domestic animals bequeathed to us by the patriarchs."

I looked at Kaciane with astonishment. His words flowed freely. He did not hesitate, but spoke with a calm inspiration and a modest gravity, sometimes closing his eyes.

"So, according to you, is it also a sin to kill fishes?" I asked.

"Fishes are cold-blooded," he answered with assurance. "Fishes are dumb creatures. They know neither joy nor sorrow. They have no feeling; their blood, even, is not living. Blood," he resumed after a moment's silence, "is not a holy thing. Blood does not see God's sun; blood hides from the light. It is a great sin to bring blood into daylight—a great sin; a frightful, yes, a frightful thing."

He sighed and bowed his head. My astonishment increased, I confess, more and more. There was nothing vulgar in these words; common people do not express themselves in such language, even those among them who pass for fine speakers. The language of Kaciane was at

once noble, thoughtful, and strange. I had never before heard anything like it.

"Tell me, pray, Kaciane," I said without taking my eyes from his gently animated face, "what do you do for a living?"

He did not reply at once, and for a moment there was an expression of uneasiness on his features.

"I live as the Lord commands," he said at last; "but as for a trade, to tell the truth, I have none. From my infancy I have never been bright. I work as well as I can, but I am not a good worker. What can I do? I have no health, and my hands are clumsy. In the spring I catch nightingales."

"You catch nightingales? But you have just told me it was wrong to catch any living thing, whether in the woods or fields or elsewhere."

"It is wrong to kill them, it is true; Death will take his own without that. Look at the carpenter Martine, for example: he did not live long, and he is dead; his wife now weeps for her husband, her little children— Against death men and animals are alike powerless. Death pursues not, and yet he cannot be escaped by flight. But there is no need to help him. As for me, I do not kill the little nightingales— God forbid! I do not trap them for their harm; I do not make them give up their lives. I capture them for the pleasure of man, for his amusement, his joy."

"Do you go to the neighborhood of Koursk¹ for them?"

"Yes, and even farther, according to circumstances. I pass nights in the marshes at the edge of the woods. I lie alone, in the fields and in the thickets. There is heard the sound of the curlew, the hare, and the wild duck. In the evening I take my observations; in the morning I listen, and at sunrise I stretch my nets over the bushes."

"Do you sell them?"

"I give them to worthy persons."

"And what else do you do?"

"How? What do I do?"

"How do you occupy yourself?"

The old man was silent.

"I occupy myself at nothing. I am a poor workman. And still I can read and write."

"Indeed!"

1. The nightingales of Koursk are held in the highest estimation.

"Yes. I learned with the help of God and some good people."

"Have you any family?"

"No, I am alone."

"How is that? Are all your relatives dead?"

"No, but I have not been fortunate in life. However, it is God's will. We are all under God's commands; but man must be just, that is all—that is pleasant to God."

"And you have no relative?"

"Yes—that is to say—" The old man appeared confused.¹

"Tell me," I continued,—“I think my driver asked you why you had not cured Martine; do you then treat diseases?"

"Your driver is a just man," replied Kaciane thoughtfully, "but yet he is not without sin. He called me a healer—me. And who can heal? It all depends upon God. There are, in truth, many herbs and flowers that bring comfort; as, for instance, water-pepper is an herb good for men, and so is the plantain. They can be spoken of; they are pure little plants, God's herbs. But there are others that are not so. They bring ease, indeed, but it is a sin to use them or even to speak of them. In case of absolute necessity it is permissible to use them with—a prayer, yes. There are also expressions like this: 'He that believes shall be saved,' " he added, dropping his voice.

"Then you gave nothing to Martine?" I asked.

"I learned about it too late," said the old man. "But what would have been the use of it? All that is written for each of us. Martine was not made to live long on this earth; that is certain. Yes, the man that is not to live long here below is not warmed by the sun, and is not nourished by bread. It is as if something called him back. Yes, may God have mercy on his soul!"

"Is it long since you were brought into our country?" I asked.

Kaciane shivered.

"No, it is not long—four years. Under the old master we lived in our old villages; but the guardian transported us. The old master had a good heart and was lowly in spirit.

1. As the sectaries do not recognize the authority of the established church, the marriages that they contract are not recognized by the law, so they dislike to speak of their families before strangers, and the continual persecutions to which they are subjected make them very suspicious.

May he enjoy the kingdom of heaven! However, the guardian was not wrong. It seemed best that he should do so."

"Where did you live before?"

"We are from the banks of the Kracivala-Métche."¹

"Is it far from here?"

"A hundred verstes."

"Were you better off there?"

"Yes, we were better off. There was more space, more water. It was our nest. This country is close and dry. Here we are orphans. When I was there—I mean on the banks of our river—I could climb the hill, and when I reached the top, God in heaven! how beautiful it was! There were rivers, and hillsides, and woods; and beyond was a church, and then more fields. I could see away way off, so far. Oh yes, here, it is true, the land is richer, clayey—a good fat soil, as the peasants say. As for me, it grows corn enough for me."

"Yet confess, my good man, that you would like to see your own country again."

"Yes, certainly I should. Yet I am well enough anywhere. I am a man without family, and love to roam. And then what? what good is it to stay at home? When one goes out, then" he continued, raising his voice, "one feels really well. The sun lights you up; you are more in sight of God; you sing better. You see the plants that spring up about you, and pick some of them. Then there is the gushing spring water, holy water. You drink, and mark its place. The birds of the good God sing. Beyond Kursk the steppes begin. How beautiful they are! How wonderful, how beautiful is the sight of them! and it rejoices the heart of man. It is a blessing from the Lord. They say the steppes stretch to the warm sea where the sweet-voiced *gamaïoun*² lives; where the leaves of the trees fall neither in autumn nor winter; and where apples of gold grow on branches of silver. There every one lives in joy and justice. There is where I would gladly go! Where have I not already been? I have been to Simbirsk and to Roumène—beautiful towns—and even to Moscow, the city of golden domes. I have seen the Oka, that good nurse; and the

1. A pretty stream in the Government of Toula whose name signifies a beautiful spring.

2. A fabulous bird whose name occurs often in the popular tales and legends.

Tsna, the dove; and the Volga, the good mother; and I have seen many people and good peasants. I have been in many a worthy city. Well, I have been yonder—yes, and there—and I am not the only one, sinner that I am. There are many other peasants who wear the lapti who roam the world, and—who search for truth. Yes; what, indeed, is there to do at home? There is no justice in man—that is the trouble.”

Kaciane uttered these last words so rapidly as to make them almost unintelligible. He added something that it was impossible for me to catch, and his face assumed an expression so weird that I involuntarily recalled the name “innocent” that my driver had applied to him. He nodded, gave a gentle cough, and seemed to come to himself again.

“What a sun!” he said in a low voice; “it is a benediction of the Lord. How good it is in the woods!”

He shrugged his shoulders, and after a moment’s silence, casting a vacant look about, began to sing softly. The words, which he pronounced in a pathetic tone, I could not entirely make out; I caught only the last lines:

“They call me Kaciane—
My nick-name is the Flea.”

“So,” said I to myself, “he composes.”

All at once he gave a start, and, stopping his song, gazed intently into the woods. Turning about, I perceived a little peasant-girl of about eight years of age in a *sarafane*.¹ She wore a striped handkerchief on her head, and a plaited basket hung from her little brown arm. She probably did not expect to meet us. She had, as the expression is, fallen upon us, and she stood motionless in the middle of a clump of hazel, gazing timidly at me out of her large black eyes. I had scarcely time to examine her before she disappeared behind a tree.

“Annouchka, Annouchka, come here; don’t be afraid,” called the old man softly.

“I am afraid,” she replied in her shrill voice.

“Don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid. Come here to me.”

Annouchka came silently out of her hiding-place and walked in a roundabout way towards him. Her little feet made scarcely a sound upon the thick grass. She came out of the thicket near the old man. She was not, as I had at

1. A skirt supported by straps over the shoulders, worn by peasants.

first judged from her figure, a child of eight, but a girl of at least thirteen or fourteen. Although small and slight, she was well proportioned and active. Her pretty little face bore a strong resemblance to Kaciane's, but the latter was not handsome, however. She had the same pointed features, the same expression, sly but confiding, thoughtful but penetrating, and the same gestures. Kaciane watched her narrowly; she turned sidewise to him.

"Were you picking mushrooms?" he asked.

"Yes, mushrooms," she replied with a timid smile.

"Have you found many?"

"A great many."

She gave him a glance, and dropped her eyes again.

"Have you found any white ones?"

"Yes."

"Let me see them; let me see them."

She slid the basket from her arm and half lifted the leaf of burdock that covered the mushrooms.

"Ah," said Kaciane, bending over the basket, "how beautiful they are! You have done well, Annouchka."

"Is she your daughter, Kaciane?" I asked.

The blood rushed quickly to Annouchka's face.

"No, she is—a relative," said Kaciane with an affectation of indifference. "Come, Annouchka, go now," he added at once. "May the Lord be with you! But take care of yourself."

"Why should she go afoot?" I asked. "We could take her back."

Annouchka became as red as a poppy, grasped the handle of her basket with both hands, and looked uneasily at the old man.

"No, she can go very well afoot," he replied slowly and with the same affectation of indifference.

"But why make her do that?"

"She will get there well enough. Away with you."

Annouchka disappeared rapidly in the woods. Kaciane followed her with his eyes, and then looked down and smiled. There was in this constrained smile, in the few words that Kaciane had spoken, and even in the tone of his voice an astonishing tenderness and delicacy. The old man cast another look in the direction that Annouchka had disappeared, smiled again, and nodded his head several times.

"Why did you send her away so quickly?" I asked. "I would have bought some of her mushrooms."

"You can buy them yonder, at the house, just as well, if you wish," he replied.

"She is a charming child," I said.

"Oh no, no," he answered as if in spite of himself, and from that moment he became taciturn again.

Finding that all my attempts to make him talk again were futile, I went back into the clearing. The heat had somewhat lessened; but the luck that had pursued me did not leave me. I returned to Joudin with my single corn-crake and the new axle. As I approached the house, Kaciane turned to me and said,

"Ah, master, master, do you know that I am guilty towards you? It was I who drove off all the game."

"How so?"

"That's my affair. You have a keen, well-broken dog, but he could not find anything. When one thinks what reasoning men do. But there is an animal, and what has been made of it?"

I should have tried in vain to persuade Kaciane that it is impossible to cast a spell on the game; and that is why I did not think of attempting to do so. Besides, we were just entering the yard.

Annouchka was not in the hut, but she had already had time to return and to leave there her basket of mushrooms. Erofei adjusted the new axle, and after submitting it to a very critical examination held it at a very low valuation. After an hour I set out, leaving a small sum of money with Kaciane that he at first refused to accept; but after holding it for some time in his hand, looking at it thoughtfully, he ended by thrusting it into his bosom. During the rest of the time I remained in the yard he maintained an almost unbroken silence. He stood, as seemed to be his habit, leaning with his back against the gate, making no reply to the sarcasms of my driver; and he gave me a very cold farewell.

As I entered the yard, I had noticed that Erofei was again in a very sombre mood. It was not without cause: he had found nothing to eat in all the village, and the water for his horses was bad. We set out. Erofei's ill-humor could be seen even in the back of his neck. Although he was dying to speak, he waited for me to begin the conversation, and contented himself with grumbling and addressing to his horses remarks that were very instructive and sometimes very insulting.

"A fine village!" he muttered. "They call that a village! I asked for at least some kvass, and there was not even any kvass. Think of that! And the water! it was simply—" (he spit vigorously)—"neither cucumbers nor kvass—nothing. Come," he continued, addressing his off horse, "I know you are a hypocrite. You make believe draw" (here he give him a cut with his whip). "The beast is entirely upset; and it used to be very willing! No! no! What is the matter, that you turn your head in that way?"

"Erofel," said I at last, "what sort of a man is this Kaciane?"

Erofel did not reply at once. He was generally very deliberate and never hurried himself; but I saw immediately that my question pleased him and had dissipated his bad humor.

"The Flea," he said at length, shaking the reins, "is a strange being, a veritable innocent. It would be hard to find another man as peculiar as he is. He and our roan horse are as like as two drops of water. He shirks his work in just the same way. I know that one makes a poor worker with such a body; but still— He has been that way from his infancy. He drove for his uncles, who kept horses, but he seemed to get tired of that. He left his occupation, and began to live at home. But that did not suit him either. He is too restless; he is a true flea. Fortunately the Lord had given him a good master who did not torment him. Since then he has done nothing but wander here and there, like a stray sheep. Then he is so peculiar! Sometimes he is as dumb as a rock; sometimes he begins to talk, and what he says God only knows! Is it an affectation? He is a very extraordinary man. He sings well, however, like that,—gravely; yes, very well."

"He also treats the sick?"

"What, he? A man like that? However, he cured me of the king's evil. He a doctor? A pretty idea! Why, he is a man without any mind. Yes, that is so," he added after a moment's silence.

"Have you known him a great while?"

"Yes, a great while; we were neighbors at Sitchovki when they were on the Kracivafa."

"And this little girl that we met in the woods,—Annouchka,—is she a relative?"

Erofel looked at me over his shoulder and began to laugh.

"She? Certainly she is a relative. She is an orphan. She has no mother; it is not even known who her mother was. But she must be a relative; she looks too much like him not to be. Then she lives with him, She is a prudent girl; no one can deny that. She is a respectable girl, and the old fellow seems to be very fond of her. He was able,—you wouldn't believe it,—he was able to teach Annouchka to read and write. Yes, he really did so. But that does not astonish me: he is so different from other men—a changeable man; and one can't even explain— Hi, hi!" exclaimed my driver, suddenly stopping his horses; and then putting his head over the side of the *téléga*, he began to sniff.

"I think I smell something burning. I certainly do. Oh, that new axle! Don't mention it to me! Yet I greased it enough, I thought. I must go for some water; there is a little pond yonder."

Erofei got slowly down from his seat, took the bucket, went towards the pond, and then returned to the *téléga*. It was not without pleasure that he listened to this hissing of the hub as it was suddenly dashed with water. He repeated this operation more than ten times during the drive of ten verstes, and we reached home at nightfall.

CHAPTER XX.

MY NEIGHBOR RADILOF.¹

IN the autumn the woodcock often seek the old parks of lindens. There are many such places in the Government of Orel. Our grandfathers were wont, when they chose a place where they proposed to build their abodes, to reserve one or two *déciatines* of good land for an orchard with walks of lindens. After fifty or sixty years these residences, these seignorial homes, gradually disappeared from off the face of the earth; the houses rotted where they stood or were sold and carried elsewhere; the dependencies that were built of brick became heaps of ruins; the apple-trees perished and were used for fuel; the enclosures and hedges were destroyed; and soon no vestige of the place remained. But the lindens continued to prosper, and, surrounded with fields under cultivation, they recall to our fickle generation the fathers and brothers who now repose in eternity. These old trees are magnificent, and thus far the pitiless axe of the Russian peasant has respected them. Their leaves are small, but their great branches spread out in every direction and form a vault impenetrable to the rays of the sun.

One day as I was beating the fields for partridges with Jermolaï, seeing an abandoned garden at a little distance from us, I went towards it. I had scarcely entered the thicket, when a woodcock started up noisily out of the bushes; I fired, and instantly an exclamation of alarm was heard a few paces from me, and the terrified face of a young girl appeared from behind a tree and disappeared again almost as soon. Jermolaï came running up to me.

"Why do you shoot here?" he said, "It is a seignorial residence."

I had not had time to answer him, and my dog, that had hastened to retrieve the wounded bird, had not yet brought

1. To understand this story it must be known that in Russia it is forbidden to marry a deceased wife's sister.

it back to me with his accustomed gravity, when the sound of a quick step was heard, and a tall man with mustaches came out of the thicket and stood before me with a look of displeasure. I made my excuses, gave my name, and offered him the woodcock that I had killed on his land.

"I am very willing," he said with a smile, "to accept your game, but upon one condition; and that is that you will come and eat it with us."

I confess that this invitation was not particularly agreeable to me, but it was impossible not to accept it.

"I am the proprietor of this place, your neighbor Radilof," he continued. "You have without doubt heard about me. To-day is Sunday, so I suppose my dinner will be passable; otherwise I wouldn't have asked you."

I made the replies that are ordinarily made under such circumstances, and we went along together towards his house. A freshly sanded path took us quickly out of the linden woods, and we entered the orchard. Here and there, between old apple-trees and clumps of gooseberry-bushes, appeared the tender green of cabbages; farther on arose high poles covered with hops; the flower-beds had become a perfect forest of little branches garnished with peas upon withered stems; enormous flat pumpkins seemed to wallow on the ground; under their pointed, dusty leaves could be discovered cucumbers that were already turning yellow; at the foot of the hedges waved tall nettles; and in other parts of the orchard grew clumps of honeysuckle, elder-bushes, and sweetbrier, the remains of the old flower-garden. Beside a little stream full of a reddish, slimy water was a well, surrounded by pools in which ducks were actively diving about; a dog that was shaking in every joint was gnawing a bone with his eyes closed; and not far away a cow was grazing peacefully in a little paddock, giving her bony back an occasional switch with her tail. At a turn in the path that we were following I perceived through a curtain of willows and birches an old gray house with a board roof and a tumble-down porch in front. Radilof stopped.

"Come," he said in a frank, good-natured tone, "I have changed my mind; perhaps you don't care to enter my house; that is why—"

I did not let him finish, but assured him that, on the contrary, it would be a very pleasant thing to dine with him.

"Very well, then; do as you wish."

We entered the house. A young man-servant in a long

kaftan of coarse blue cloth met us on the steps. Radilof at once directed him to offer some brandy to Jermolaf, who made a profound bow to his magnanimous host, although the latter's back was turned. From an anteroom that was filled with motley prints and shells we passed into the little room that served for Radilof's study. I laid aside my accoutrements and deposited my gun in the corner. The servant in the long kaftan hastened to help me get rid of the dust that covered me.

"Come now into the sitting-room," said Radilof graciously. "I want to present you to my mother."

I followed him. An old lady was seated upon the divan in the centre of the room; she had on a brown dress and a white cap; her thin features wore an expression of sweetness, and her timid look was full of sadness.

"Our neighbor, mother," said Radilof.

The little old lady rose and bowed without letting go of the thick, bag-like reticule that she held in her thin hands.

"Have you been long in the country?" she asked, with a slight movement of the eyelids, in a soft, feeble voice.

"No, a very short time."

"Do you propose to stay long here?"

"I intend to stay here until winter."

The old lady was silent.

"And here is Fedor Mikéitch," said Radilof, indicating a tall thin man whom I had not noticed before. "Come, Fedia, give our guest a specimen of your talent. Why have you buried yourself in that corner?"

The individual thus addressed immediately rose, took from the window-seat a wretched violin which he placed against his breast, and seizing the bow in the middle he began to scrape on his instrument, and to sing and dance. He appeared to be about seventy years old; a long frock-coat of nankeen floated sadly over his thin, bony limbs. He danced with strange contortions; sometimes nodding his little bald head with a smart air, and at others swaying it languidly as if he was about to give up the ghost. He would stretch out his long neck with its swelling veins, stamp on the floor, and at times bend his knees with difficulty. The sounds that issued from his toothless mouth were harsh and indistinct. Radilof understood without doubt from the expression of my face that Fedia's skill did not give me all the pleasure he thought it would.

"Well done, old fellow," he said to him; "that is enough.

"You can go and get your reward." The old man immediately deposited his violin on the window-seat, bowed to each of us in turn, beginning with me as the stranger, and went out of the room.

"He was a gentleman also," continued my new friend; "he even had a fair fortune; but he has squandered it, and now he lives with me. Formerly he passed for the most enterprising man in the government. He has eloped with the wives of two men; he has had singers, and could himself sing and dance better than any one. But don't you want a taste of brandy? Dinner is on the table."

The young girl that I had seen in the woods now came in.

"Ah, here is Olga," said Radilof, turning his head slightly. "I put her under your care. Come, let us sit down."

We went into the dining-room. While we were taking our places, Fedor Mikéitch, with his eyes glistening and his nose a little red from the reward that had been administered to him, sang "*Retentissez foudres de la victoire.*"¹ A place was set for him apart in the corner at a little table without any table-cloth. The poor old fellow could not boast of being very neat, and that is why they always kept him a little apart from the company. He crossed himself with a sigh, and began to eat like a shark. The dinner was really pretty good, and following the custom there was served in honor of the day a shaking jelly and some Spanish puffs. Radilof, who had served two years in an infantry regiment, and had been in Turkey during the last war, gave us a chapter of his campaigns. I listened with pleasure, all the while stealing sly glances at Olga. She could not be called pretty, but the look of quiet decision that appeared on her features, her large white forehead, her thick hair, her brown eyes, small but lively, intelligent and clear, would have impressed any man in my place. She followed the stories of Radilof with interest, or rather with a contained and passionate attention. Radilof might have been her father; he treated her with familiarity, but I immediately divined that she was not his daughter. In the course of his conversation he happened to mention his wife, who was dead, and he added "her sister," indicating Olga. She at once blushed and dropped her eyes. Radilof stopped and changed the conversation to another subject. The old mother did not open her mouth during the whole dinner. She eat almost nothing, and did not press me to do honor

1. A celebrated hymn composed in the time of Catherine.

to the various dishes that were served. I thought I could read on her features a sort of expectation, sickly and without hope—that peculiar expression of sorrow that it is so sad to see in the faces of the aged. After dinner Fedor Mikéitch began to sing¹ the merits of the master of the house and his guest. But Radilof gave me a glance and begged him to be seated. The old fellow passed his hand over his mouth, dropped his eyes, made a bow, and took his seat again modestly on the edge of his chair. When we got up from the table we went into our host's study.

There is generally found among men who cherish a ruling thought or passion something in common that gives them a certain moral resemblance, however different may be their accomplishments, their talents, their position in the world, and the education that they have received. The more I observed Radilof, the more apparent it seemed to be that he belonged to this class of individuals. He talked, it is true, about economy, crops, and war, without forgetting the gossip of the district and the approaching elections of the nobility. He talked naturally and even warmly on these subjects, but he would suddenly draw a little sigh and fall back in his chair, and pass his hand over his forehead like a man who is tired out by a painful task. One would have said that his warm and generous heart was imbued with a single feeling. I had already been much surprised to find him indifferent to the things most of our country proprietors are so much interested in: he cared for neither the table, nor for shooting, nor for the nightingales of Koursk, nor for tumbler-pigeons, nor for Russian literature, nor for running horses, nor for Hungarian coats, nor for cards and billiards, nor for dances, nor for trips to the capital and the towns of the government, nor for paper-mills, nor for sugar-refineries, nor for motley pavilions, nor for tea, nor for prancing carriage-horses, nor for even the fat coachmen with belts up under their armpits—those majestic coachmen who at each movement of the neck, for some reason or other, open their eyes so wide that they seem about to start out of their heads. "What sort of a country gentleman can he be, then?" I said to myself. However, I ought to add that he did not in any way seek to give himself the appearance of a gloomy man or one discontented with his lot. On the contrary, his whole appearance breathed an air of extreme kindness, a

1. It is still the custom in Russia, in the provinces, to sing at the end of dinner of the merits of the host at whose table you are.

most frank cordiality, and a disposition, almost humble, to become intimate with the first-comer. It did not take long, it is true, to discover that it was impossible for him to attach himself to any one; and that, not from want of sympathy, but because his whole being was for the moment concentrated upon himself. When I examined him attentively, it was impossible for me to imagine that he could be happy either in the present or the future. He was not handsome, but his look, his smile, his whole exterior, exerted a secret attraction. I said secret, and that is certainly the word. One felt drawn towards him by this undefinable appearance. Sometimes, however, the proprietor of the steppe showed out in him; but he was on the whole an excellent man.

We were beginning to talk about the new marshal of the nobility, when the voice of Olga was heard. "Tea is ready," she said from the sitting-room. We accepted her invitation. Fedor Mikéitch was sitting in his customary place in a corner between the door and the window, with his feet modestly drawn under his chair. Radilof's mother was knitting a stocking. The windows that looked upon the garden were open, and the freshness of the autumn air and the perfume of the apples pervaded the room. Olga was stirring about, preparing the tea. I observed her more attentively than I did during the dinner. Like all young women of the provinces, she talked very little; but I did not remark in her that desire to say something gracious coupled with a feeling of absolute nullity, and the confusion arising from this powerlessness; she did not sigh as if her heart was overflowing with sentiments that she could scarcely contain; nor did she roll her eyes with a pensive smile. Her look was tranquil and indifferent, like that of a person who has just experienced a great happiness or a very keen emotion. Her walk and every movement indicated firmness and decision. This new examination established her in my good graces.

Radilof and I resumed our conversation again. I do not know how it happened that we came to discuss an incontestable point, namely, that very insignificant circumstances often produce an impression much stronger than the most important events.

"Yes," said Radilof, "I know that from experience. You are aware that I have been married about three years, and that my wife died in child-birth. I thought I should not survive her; I could not have been in a state of more absolute despair, but it was impossible for me to weep—I

was like one possessed. After she had been laid out according to our custom, she was placed upon the table¹—in this very room where we are. The priest came with his sub-deacons and began to chant and pray and burn incense. I prostrated myself with my face to the ground, but without shedding a tear. My heart and my head were like stone—I was crushed. So the first day passed. The night came, and—will you believe me?—I slept. The next morning I went into the room where the body of my wife was lying. It was summer, and the sunlight covered it from heat to foot—a dazzling sunlight. But all at once I perceived” (here Radilof shuddered) “—what do you think? One of her eyes was partially open, and upon this eye a fly was crawling. I fell like a dead person, and when I came to I began to weep; nothing could quiet me.”

Radilof was silent. I looked at him and then turned my eyes towards Olga. I shall never so long as I live forget the expression on her face. Radilof's old mother dropped her stocking into her lap, and, drawing a handkerchief from her reticule, furtively wiped away a tear. Fedor Mikéitch jumped up, seized his violin, and struck up a song in a hoarse, wild voice. He intended doubtlessly to distract our attention; but the first sound he uttered made us shudder, and Radilof begged him to stop.

“However,” he resumed, “what is past cannot be helped. It is impossible to change anything; and then—all is for the best in this world, as has been said—I think by Voltaire,” he added quickly.

“Yes,” I replied, “you are right; there is no evil that cannot be borne, as there is no position, however critical, that is hopeless.”

“Do you think so?” said Radilof. “Perhaps you are right. I remember that when I was in Turkey I was once in the hospital at the point of death: I had the typhus fever. The place was not the best arranged one in the world, but *à la guerre comme à la guerre*, and I ought to have considered myself lucky. However, new patients are brought in, and where are they to be put? The doctor bustles about; it is impossible. He comes to my bed and asks the nurse, ‘Is he alive?’ The nurse replies, ‘He was alive this morning.’ The doctor bends over me: I still breathe. The dear fellow could not help saying, ‘How is it he can have such a ridiculous constitution? He won't get well, and he

1. In Russia it is the custom to lay out the dead on a table.

ought to die. But no! he hangs on, just at death's door, and keeps the place that we want.'

"'Well,' I said to myself, 'it seems that I am not going to get out of this scrape.' Nevertheless I did get well, and as you see I am still in the land of the living. Yes, you are right."

"I am right in any event," I replied; "for even if you had died, you would have escaped from the unfortunate position you were in."

"True, beyond peradventure," he replied, bringing his fist down upon the table. "The only thing is to be able to make up your mind. Why remain in a false position? Why hesitate and put off?"

Olga rose hastily and went out into the garden.

"Come, Fedia, a song," exclaimed Radilof.

The old fellow started up, and began to march about the room with all the elegance of the goat¹ that is led about in public with a tame bear, singing "*Devant notre porte-cochère.*"

The sound of a drochki was heard in the court-yard, and a few minutes later an old man, tall and rather stout, appeared in the room; he was an odnodvoretz named Ovcianikof. But he is such a remarkable person that I must ask the reader's permission to devote a separate chapter to him. For the present I will content myself with adding that I started out again the next morning at daybreak, and at the end of the day I returned home. Several weeks passed. I called again at Radilof's, but I found neither him nor Olga there. A fortnight afterwards I learned that he had suddenly left his mother, and fled with his sister-in-law. This elopement created a great sensation throughout the whole government, and it was only then that I understood the meaning of the look I noticed on Olga's face when Radilof was telling me about his wife's death. It was not grief alone that she felt at that moment, but she was consumed with jealousy.

Before leaving my place, I paid a visit to Radilof's old mother, and found her in the sitting-room, playing cards with Fedor Mikéitch.

"Have you had any news of your son?" I asked in the course of the conversation. The poor woman burst into tears, and I spoke no more of the fugitives.

1. Generally a man is dressed up to resemble a goat, and dances before the bear to arouse him.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ODNODVORETZ.¹

IMAGINE, my dear readers, a man tall, corpulent, at least seventy years of age, with a physiognomy that recalls a little that of Krylof,² an intelligent eye, thick eyebrows, a noble bearing, measured speech, and a deliberate walk,—such is in a few words the portrait of Louka Pétrovitch-Ovcianikof. He generally wore a large blue frock-coat buttoned up to the throat, a green silk cravat, and hussar boots ornamented with a tassel. His dress was, as can be seen, very much like that of a rich merchant. He had soft white, well-shaped hands, and when he talked he often played with the buttons of his coat. With his imposing and quiet manner, his wisdom and indolence, his uprightness and obstinacy, Ovcianikof recalled in my mind our old Boyards of the time before Peter the Great; the *feriase*³ seemed made for him; he was one of the last representatives of the men of the past century; all his neighbors held him in high esteem, and considered it an honor to be one of his acquaintances. As to his odnodvoretz brothers, they almost worshipped him; they were extremely proud of him, and took off their hats as soon as they saw him in the distance. It is generally rather difficult at present to distinguish an odnodvoretz from a peasant; his house is often poorer than that of a farm-serf; his cattle do not feed on clover; his horses can scarcely walk; and ropes take the place of harness. Ovcianikof was an exception to the rule; although—be it understood—he did not pass for a rich man. He lived alone with his wife in a comfortable, well-kept little house; his servants were few in number and were dressed in the Russian mode; he always spoke of them as “my workmen,” and employed them in the cultivation of his land. He did not give himself the airs of a lord, nor did

1. Impoverished gentlemen who have lost their rights. They form a class by themselves in Russia.

2. A very popular Russian fabulist: the Russian La Fontaine.

3. The court costume of the old Boyards.

he affect to be noble; he never forgot himself, as the saying is. He did not seat himself at the first request, and whenever any one entered the room he rose; but his bearing was so dignified, and his manners bore such a stamp of nobility, that the new-comer involuntarily saluted him with the greatest respect. Ovcianikof held to old customs; not, however, from a superstitious attachment—for he had a rather independent mind—but from habit. Thus, for example, he did not like carriages with springs, for he found them uncomfortable; he never went out except in a hired drochki or in a little téléga with leather cushions. While he himself drove his fine bay horse (he had only horses of this color in his stables), his groom, a good-looking young fellow with hair cut in the Russian style,¹ wearing an *armiak* fastened at the waist by a leather belt, and a sheep-skin cap, sat respectfully at his side. Ovcianikof always fell asleep after dinner, went to the bath every Saturday, never read anything but books of piety (when he would place his silver spectacles solemnly on his nose), went early to bed and rose betimes. He wore no beard, and wore his hair in the German fashion. He received his guests with an affable, kindly manner, but he did not salute them with a profound bow as common people do, nor did he load them with attentions, nor regale them with all sorts of preserves and pickles, “Wife,” he would say slowly without rising, and only turning his head slightly towards her, “bring a little of something to these gentlemen.” He held it to be a sin to sell his grain—“it is a gift from heaven,” he said. But in 1840, at the time of the famine, he distributed all his store of grain among the proprietors and peasants of the neighborhood; the next year these latter gratefully acquitted themselves of the debt in kind. Very frequently the neighbors would submit their differences to Ovcianikof, and they almost always accepted his decisions and followed his advice. A great many of them settled the boundaries of their estates amicably, thanks to him; but, after one or two discussions with noble ladies who had estates in the vicinity, he declared once for all that he would never act as mediator between persons of the female sex. He could not endure the temper, the excitement, the talk, and the confusion. One day a fire broke out in his house, and one of his workmen rushed excitedly into his room and shouted, “Fire! fire!” “Why are you shouting like that?” said Ovcianikof calmly.

1. Russian peasants let their hair grow below their ears.

"Hand me my hat and cane." He liked to break his horses himself, and once a spirited bitouk¹ ran away with him down a hill towards a ravine. "Come, you little fool, be quiet, be quiet!" said Ovcianikof, "you will do yourself some harm;" and a moment later the horse, the drochki, and the groom who was seated beside Ovcianikof, rolled with him into the ravine. Fortunately the bottom was covered with sand and there was no serious accident to deplore, the horse alone spraining his leg. "You see now," said Ovcianikof quietly, as he picked himself up, "I warned you."—He had found a wife who was perfectly suited to him. Tatiana Ilinichna Ovcianikof was tall, grave, and silent; and she always wore a brown silk handkerchief about her head. Her manners were glacial; and yet no one ever had reason to complain of her severity; while, on the contrary, great numbers of poor persons gave her the name of mother and benefactress. Her regular features, her large black eyes, and her finely cut lips still bore witness to the beauty for which she had been celebrated. But this couple—so well matched—had no children.

I made the acquaintance of Ovcianikof at Radilof's house, as I have already told you, and a few days afterwards I called upon him. He was at home, and I found him sitting in a large leather arm-chair reading "The Lives of the Saints." A gray cat purred upon his shoulder. He received me as usual in a pleasant and dignified manner, and we began at once to talk.

"Tell me frankly, Louka Pétrovitch," I said to him in the course of our conversation, "the old times were better than ours."

"In some respects," replied Ovcianikof; "as for instance we lived more tranquilly. There was more comfort, it is true; but nevertheless our times are better, and, by the grace of God, our children will be even better off than we are."

"Why, I expected, Louka Pétrovitch, to hear from your mouth a eulogium of the old times."

"No, for my part I have no reason to praise them. Let me give you an instance. You are a noble, as was your late grandfather before you; yet your power is much less than his was, and you yourself are an entirely different sort of man. There are even now many nobles who oppress us, but that is

1. This name is given to a particular breed of horses raised in the Government of Voronéje.

inevitable. By dint of grinding we shall in the end get fine flour. No, I shall never again see what I have seen in my early life."

"What, then, have you seen?"

"Take for example your grandfather of whom I have just spoken. He was a powerful man, and he did not spare us common people. Now you doubtless know—you ought to know your own estates—the little corner of land that is between Tchapliguino and Malinina. At present it is planted with oats. Very well; it belongs to us; all that place is ours. Your grandfather took it from us. He mounted his horse one day and stretched out his hand towards it, and said, "That belongs to me," and he became the master of it. My late father—may God have mercy on his soul!—was a just man, but quick-tempered, and he took the affair to heart. One does not like to let one's self be plundered without resistance. He carried the matter before the courts. The others were afraid, and he appeared alone. Your grandfather soon learned that Peter Ovcianikof accused him of having deigned to take his land from him. He at once sent out his huntsman, Bahouche, with his men, who seized my father and took him on to your estate. I was then a very small boy, and followed with bare feet. Do you know what passed? They took him under the windows of your house and flogged him there, under the very windows. Your grandfather stood upon the balcony and watched the execution. Your grandmother was sitting at the window watching it also. My father cried out, 'Maria Vacilievna, my mother, deign to intercede for me; be merciful!' But she contented herself with getting up and looking at him. My father was obliged to promise that he would never claim the land again, and to give thanks that he had been permitted to live. Ask of your peasants the name that was given to this piece of land. It is called 'The Cudgel,' because it was by means of the cudgel that it was acquired. You must understand now why it is that little persons like myself ought not to regret the olden time."

I did not know how to reply to Ovcianikof, and dared not even raise my eyes to his.

"There came to us about the same time another neighbor, of the name of Stépane Niktopolionitch Komof. He also acted cruelly towards my father. If not in one way, it was in another that we were beset. This Komof was a drunkard and loved to make others drink too. When in his drunken

fits he said in bad French, with his tongue in his cheek, '*C'est bonne.*' He would begin his pranks by having all the holy images taken out of the room. He would send for his neighbors in the carriages that were always ready at his order, and if any one of them would not come he would go for him himself. He was a very peculiar person. He never lied when he was sober, but scarcely had he swallowed a drop of anything when he would begin to tell how that he had at Petersburg three houses—a red one with a single chimney, a yellow one with two chimneys, and a blue one without any chimney at all. He would say that he had three sons—he had nevertheless never been married—of whom one was in the cavalry, another in the infantry, and the third did nothing. Each of them, he would add, lived in one of his houses. The eldest received none but admirals, the second only generals, and the third nothing but Englishmen. Then he would get up and say, 'To the health of my eldest son—he is the most respectable of the three;' and thereupon he would begin to weep. Woe unto him that refused to drink! 'I will blow out his brains,' he would say, 'and I won't let his body be buried.' Sometimes he would jump up suddenly and exclaim, 'Dance, children of the good God, divert yourselves and amuse me.' And there was nothing to say; the dance had to proceed at any cost. He had used up all the young *dvorovi* girls. Every night they sang in chorus until morning, and the one that sang the highest received a reward. When their song slackened, he would bury his face in his hands and begin to groan out, 'Oh, poor orphan that I am! They abandon me, little dove that I am!' Then the grooms would immediately rush in with their whips to give new life to the singers. He took a fancy to my father; what could be done? He all but buried him. He certainly would have killed him, if by good luck he had not first died himself. One day when he was in his cups he fell from the top of a dovecote. That is what our dear neighbors did in the olden time."

"The times then are very much changed," I said.

"Yes, no doubt," he replied. "It must, however, be acknowledged that the nobles in those times lived with more pomp. As to the great nobles, there can be no comparison made; I have had the opportunity to observe them at Moscow. But they say that even in Moscow they are no longer on the old footing."

"You have been to Moscow, then?"

"Yes; but it is a long time, a very long time ago. I am now seventy-three at least, and I was only sixteen when I was in Moscow."

Ovcianikof sighed.

"What have you seen of the great nobles?"

"I have seen more than one of them. Any one could see them; their houses were open to all comers. None of them, however, came up to the late Count Alexis Grigorievitch Orlof Tchesmenski. I have often seen him; my uncle was his steward. The count at that time was pleased to live near the Kalouga gate. He was indeed a great noble! What a bearing! What affability! Nothing like it can be imagined; and it is impossible to give any idea of it in words! What a figure! You ought to have seen him. What power! and with it what a look! Before seeing him you were timid about entering his house; you were afraid—intimidated; but once in, he was like a ray of sun that warms you, and you felt rejoiced. He permitted every one to approach him, and he had every possible taste. He drove for himself at the races,¹ and never passed his adversary in the beginning for fear of offending him; he took care to pass him only on the home-stretch. And how kind he was! How he would console the person he had defeated, and praise his horse! He kept the very best tumbler-pigeons, and had a habit of sitting in a large arm-chair in the middle of the court-yard and ordering them to be let out. Men were then stationed with guns on the tops of the buildings about to keep off the hawks. A large silver basin filled with water was then placed at his feet, and he would watch the movements of the pigeons in it. Hundreds of sick and needy persons were supported at his expense. How much money he gave away! But when he was in a passion it was as if the thunder were growling. However, he always frightened people more than he hurt them. They had scarcely time to recover themselves, when he was smiling again. When he gave a banquet he made the whole town drunk. And how skilful he was! He could beat the Turk! He was fond of wrestling also, and the wrestlers of Toula, of Karkof, of Tambof, and of all parts came to him. Whom-ever he beat he rewarded; but whoever threw the count, him he would kiss upon the mouth and load with gifts. While I

1. Count Orloff introduced into Russia the trotting race, and it has been kept up to the present time.

was at Moscow he arranged a coursing-match such as there had never been in all Russia; he invited all the sportsmen in the empire without exception. He appointed a day, and gave them three months in which to assemble. Then they came with their dogs and their huntsmen, an army—a veritable army of them. They naturally began with a banquet, and then they all repaired to the coursing-ground. All the world was there. And what do you think? It was one of your grandfather's dogs that outran all the others."

"It was Milovidka, was it not?" I asked.

"Yes, Milovidka, Milovidka. The count began to importune your grandfather. 'Sell me the dog,' he said; 'I will give anything you ask.' 'No, count,' he replied, 'I am not a merchant. I would not sell a rag. I would give my wife for nothing, as a mark of consideration; but Milovidka, never! I would rather give myself up bound hand and foot.' And Alexis Grigorievitch applauded him, 'That suits me,' he said. Your grandfather carried Milovidka away in his carriage, and when he died buried him in the garden with music. Yes, he had the dog buried, and ordered a stone to be placed over his grave."

"You must acknowledge that Alexis Grigorievitch at least never wronged any person."

"It is always so. People who cannot swim in deep water are always the ones that do the most harm."

"Who is this Bahouche of whom you have spoken?" I asked after a moment's silence.

"How? do you know about Milovidka, and don't know who this Bahouche was? He was a Tartar, the chief huntsman and equerry of your grandfather, who cared even more for him than he did for Milovidka. He was a man ready for anything. Every command that your grandfather gave him he executed on the instant. To obey he would have thrown himself upon the point of a sword. And how he would urge on the dogs! You could hear him from one end of the forest to the other. But he was often freaky. He would get off his horse and lie down in the grass. No sooner would the dogs cease to hear his voice than they would stop short. They would drop the scent, and nothing in the world could induce them to pick it up again. Your grandfather would fly into a passion. 'May I die if I don't hang the rascal! I'll turn him inside out, the antichrist! I'll make him swallow his heels, the villain!' But he would content himself with sending to inquire what Bahouche wanted, and

why he did not send the dogs forward. Bahouche generally demanded brandy, and then he would remount and begin to shout louder than ever."

"You, too, are fond of hunting, I see, Louka Pétrovitch."

"Now I am too old; but when I was young I will not say that I was not. But in my condition of life it is a difficult thing. It does not do for us small people to play the lord. At one time, it is true, a man of our class, a sort of drunken good-for-nothing, made advances to some of the nobility, imagining that they would treat him as a comrade; but a fine time he had of it! He made a laughing-stock of himself. They put him astride of a nag that stumbled at each step, and amused themselves with knocking off his cap every minute. They cut him with whips under the pretext of beating his horse, and he had to laugh and to serve as a buffoon for others. No, you see that the more dependent one is the more circumspect one must be in order not to incur contempt.

"Yes," continued Ovcianikof with a sigh, "it is a long time since I came into the world, and other times are here. It is especially with the nobility that the change is marked. The small proprietors have all been in government employ, or have at least seen something of their country; the large proprietors are also very much changed. I have had an opportunity to become acquainted with them, with the rich ones at least, at the time of the land valuation. I will not conceal from you that my heart has been rejoiced at seeing them. They have become more affable, more polite. But what astonishes me is that while they know all the sciences and can speak so as to move the very soul, they are absolutely unacquainted with business and do not understand their own interests. Generally their steward, a simple serf, does what he wants to with them. You doubtless know Alexander Vladimirovitch Korolef. He is a veritable noble. He is handsome in person and is rich. He has studied at the *universités*, and has even, I believe, travelled in foreign countries. He talks easily and modestly, and always shakes hands with us. You know him? Very well; listen to my story. Last week when we had assembled at Berezovka, where we had been summoned by Nikifor Ilitch, the arbitrator,—'Gentlemen,' he said, 'it is necessary to proceed with the survey of your lands for the purpose of the valuation. It is a shame we are behind the others; let us set to work.' The work was begun, and soon the ordinary discussions

were started among us ; our attorney took an active part in them. The first to get angry was Porfiri Ovtchinikof ; and why should he act so ? He has not a foot of land in the world ; he represents his brother. However, he began to vociferate : ' No, you won't make me do that ! I am not that kind of a fellow ! Give me the plan. Have the surveyor brought in ; bring the rascal here.' ' But what are your claims ? ' they asked him. ' Do you take me for a fool ? Do you think I am going to expose my hand like that ? No ; bring me the plans first ! the plans, I say ! ' And all the while he was holding forth in this manner he was thumping the plans with his fist, for they were before him on the table. He then made some very insulting remarks about Marfa Dmitrevna, who exclaimed, ' How do you dare to asperse my reputation ? ' ' Your reputation, indeed ? ' he replied. ' I wouldn't have it for my bay mare ! ' He could be calmed only by making him drink madeira. But he had scarcely been quieted when others broke out. Poor Alexander Vladimirovitch remained seated in the, corner nodding and sucking the head of his cane. I was ashamed of the disorder, and I should have been glad to be far away from it. ' What will the worthy man think of us ? ' I said to myself. But all at once he rose and indicated a desire to speak. The moderator at once exclaimed, ' Gentlemen, gentlemen, Alexander Vladimirovitch wishes to speak.' I must do the persons present the justice to say that they all hastened to become quiet. Alexander Vladimirovitch began. ' It seems to me, gentlemen,' he said, ' that we are losing sight of the object for which this meeting was called. The delimitation of our estates is not only useful for the proprietors, but it has also another advantage : it will make the task of the peasant easier ; you must lighten his work and make it possible for him to pay his rent with less difficulty. At present he scarcely knows his land, and has often to go five verstes to cultivate his fields. Why be so exacting with him ? ' After that Alexander Vladimirovitch told us that it was a crime in proprietors not to occupy themselves more with the well-being of their peasants ; that their interests and ours were common : when they were prosperous we were prosperous, and when they were unprosperous we were so too. That was why it would be wicked to separate without coming to some agreement, and that because of mere trifles. He continued at great length in that strain, and how well he spoke ! What he said went straight to the heart. The

nobles listened to him quite abashed; and I myself had a tear in my eye. Truly nothing better expressed or more full of wisdom could be found even in the old books. But do you know how it all came out? He himself refused to cede the déciatines of marsh, nor would he sell it. He said, 'I will have the land drained by my people, and I will build an improved woollen mill there. I had already fixed upon this place some time ago to carry out my plans.' Good enough, if this reason had had any foundation! But no! the fact is that Antone Karacikof, a neighbor of Alexander Vladimirovitch, had refused to make a present of a hundred roubles to his steward. Finally we separated without having done anything. But Alexander Vladimirovitch still believes he is right, and talks more than ever of his woollen factory; but he does not dream of draining the marsh."

"And how does he manage his estates?"

"He is continually introducing changes. The peasants do not praise him much; but they must not be heeded. Alexander Vladimirovitch is right."

"How, Louka Pétrovitch? I thought you were attached to the old customs."

"Oh, my case is different. I am neither gentleman nor noble. Of what matter is the management of my domain? Besides, I should know how to do differently: I simply do my best to act uprightly and obey the law. That is all I care for. The young nobles do not like the old usages. I approve them; it is a good thing to discuss matters. But the trouble is here: these gentleman go too far. They treat their peasants like playthings. They make them turn round and round and then throw them aside. And then the steward, whether he is a serf or a German, gets the peasant in his clutches. You will not find a single young proprietor who sets us an example and shows us what we should do. How will it all end? Can it be possible that I shall die without seeing the new order of things? It is astounding that the old should be dead and the new not yet appear."

I did not know how to reply to Ovcianikof. He looked about him, came up to me, and said in a low tone,

"Have you ever heard speak of Vassili Nikolaïtch Lioubozvonof?"¹

"No, I don't know him."

1. This personage represents a Slavophile; that is to say, a partisan of the old order of things, and an opponent of the reforms introduced by Peter the Great.

"Then explain to me, I beg you, this marvel; it is beyond me: I have the fact, however, from his own peasants, but I do not understand at all what they tell me. You know that he is still young, and has only lately come into possession of his estates upon the death of his mother. He arrives in the village: the peasants had assembled to see the new lord, and he finds them there. The peasants look at him: what a marvel! He wears velvet breeches like a coachman, boots up to his knees, a red shirt, and a kaftan. He grows a beard, and the little cap that he has on his head is most comical, and his face is comical, too. He isn't drunk, but he is not exactly himself. 'Good-day, children,' he says, 'God bless you.' The peasants bow, but say nothing. You understand: they are abashed. The master himself seems to be a little timid, but he continues to speak. 'I am a Russian,' he says, 'and you are Russians. I love everything that is Russian. I have a Russian heart and Russian blood.' Then he suddenly exclaimed, in a tone of command, 'Come, children, strike up a Russian song, a national song.' The peasants were so frightened that their knees knocked together; one of them, bolder than the others, began a song, but stopped almost as soon as he began, and hastened to hide himself in the crowd. Do you know what surprises me most in all this? We have often had dissipated and vulgar lords; they would dress almost like their grooms, would dance, sing, play on the guitar, and drink with their dvorovi and their peasants: but Vassili Nikolaitch is more like a girl; he passes his time in reading, writing, or declaiming cantatas; he converses with no one; he is wild, and does nothing but walk about his garden as if he were dying of ennui or sorrow. The old steward was alarmed when he was informed of the expected arrival of the young master: he began to visit the peasants and treat them very civilly. The old cat knows very well whose meat he has eaten. The peasants were not taken in by this behavior. 'It is in vain, my fine fellow,' they said; 'all that won't get you out of the scrape; you will have to render your account, my turtle-dove. We shall see you dance.' But they were mistaken; in place of that it happened—God himself could make nothing of it! The young master summoned him before him, and said, blushing and hesitating, 'Understand that you must be upright; do you hear? and don't oppress the peasants.' And since that he has never summoned him in again. He lives in the country like a

stranger. Seeing that, the steward was reassured, and the peasants did not dare to complain to Vassili Nikolaïtch: they were afraid. Here is another strange thing: the master salutes them and looks kindly at them; but, in spite of it all, they almost die of fear when they see him. How do you explain this? Perhaps age makes me stupid; but I can make nothing of it."

I replied to Ovcianikof that Lioubozvonof was probably ill.

"He ill! He is as broad as he is tall, and his face is as round as an apple, young as he is. But who can tell?" and Ovcianikof drew a deep sigh.

"Come, let us leave the nobles," I said, "and talk about the odnodvoretz, Louka Pétrovitch."

"No, spare me from talking about them," he replied quickly. "Truly—I would have told you a great many things; but what would be the use?" Ovcianikof made a gesture with his hand. "Let us rather sit down to tea. We odnodvoretz are peasants: and for that matter, could we be anything else?"

He became silent. Tea was brought in. Tatiana Ilinichna arose and came to sit beside us. In the course of the evening she went out and in several times without making the slightest noise. Silence reigned through the room. Ovcianikof gravely filled the cups one after another.

"Mitia came to-day," said Tatiana Ilinichna in a low voice.

"What does he want?" replied Ovcianikof, frowning.

"He came to excuse himself."

Ovcianikof nodded.

"I appeal to you," he said, turning to me. "What must be done with relatives? They cannot be abandoned. Heaven has blessed me with a nephew, a young fellow that does not lack mind; he is bright, I agree, and he has studied; but I can get no good out of him. He entered the service of the crown; then he left it—he did not rise quickly enough. What do you think of that? He is not noble, and a noble even does not reach the rank of general with a jump. Now he is out of employment; but this would be only half an evil had he not taken to pettifogging. He writes petitions and informations for the peasants; he directs the *sotski*;¹

1. An officer or peasant employed under the orders of the *ispravnik* for police duty in the district.

he shows up the tricks of the surveyors; he frequents public-houses, associates with tradesmen and waiters. Following in that course, he may go a great way farther. The police have already threatened him more than once; but he has been able to get himself out of the scrape: he makes them laugh, and takes them in. He isn't in your room, is he?" he added, turning to his wife. "I know you: your heart is tender, and you have taken him under your protection."

Tatiana Ilinichna smiled, looked down, and blushed.

"I was not mistaken," resumed Ovcianikof. "Well, tell him to come in; there is nothing to be done. I will pardon the fool in honor of our dear guest. Come, fetch him in."

Tatiana Ilinichna went to the door and called, "Mitia!"

A young man of about eight-and-twenty, tall, well made, and with curly hair, appeared upon the threshold; but when he saw me he stopped. He was dressed like a German, but the sleeves of his coat were cut in the leg-of-mutton fashion, and their dimensions were alone enough to prove that his tailor was a true Russian of the provinces.

"Come here, come here," said the old man to him. "You seem to be very timid. Thank your aunt; you are forgiven. There, father, I recommend him to you," he added, pointing to Mitia; "he is my nephew, but that is all I can say for him. The end of the world is coming!" We exchange bows. "Come, tell us about the last affair you have been mixed up in. Why were you complained of? Come, speak out."

It was very easy to see that Mitia did not care to enter into explanations and to justify himself in my presence.

"I will tell you all about it later, uncle," he stammered out.

"No, tell me at once," replied the old man. "You don't want to talk before this gentleman. I understand it, and it is so much the worse for you. Do your penance. Come, please to begin; we are listening."

"I have nothing to blush for," said Mitia vivaciously, shaking his head. "I will make you the judge of it yourself, uncle. Some odnodvoretz from Réchitilof came to me and said, 'Defend us, brother!' 'What is the trouble?' 'This is it: Our corn-magazines are as well kept as possible; an officer suddenly came to inspect them. He goes through them and then says to us, 'Your magazines are in a bad condition; they need many things. I shall make my report.'"

"What do they need?" "That is my affair," he replies. We came together and decided that we must follow the custom and "thank" the officer; but old Prokofitch opposed this. He said: "That is just the way to attract others. That is not the thing to do at all. Is there no justice for us?" We followed the old fellow's advice, but the officer was enraged. He made his report and complained of us. Now we are in a pretty fix.' 'Is it true that your magazines are in a good condition?' I asked. 'We call God to witness that nothing is wanting, and that they contain the amount of corn required by the government.' 'If that is so, have no fear,' I said; 'have no fear.' And I drew an instrument for them. It is not yet known how the affair will come out; but that complaint should be made to you against me on this account is easily understood. Every one thinks of himself."

"It is true," replied the old man in a low voice; "but you, you hardly think so. You are still mixed up in some way in the affairs of the peasants of Choutolomof."

"How do you know?"

"It appears that I must have been informed of it, since I speak of it to you."

"That is another case where I am not in the wrong, and I will convince you that I am not. The proprietor Bezpandine has ploughed four déciatines that belong to the peasants of Choutolomof. He pretends that this land belongs to him. The peasants have leasehold estates in their fields, and their landlord is abroad. Who then is there to defend them, I ask you? The land is certainly theirs, and has belonged to them for ages. They came to me and said, 'Write us a petition!' I wrote one. When Bezpandine learned it, he began to threaten. 'I'll break every bone in the body of that Mitia,' he said, 'or, rather, I'll knock his head off.' We shall see how he will manage it. At present it is still on my shoulders."

"Come, don't be so brave," said the old man. "It is already very far gone, that poor head of yours. You have lost your brains completely."

"How is that, uncle? Was it not you who were pleased to tell me that—"

"I know what you refer to," interrupted the old man. "It is true that every man ought to live uprightly, and to succor his fellow-men is his duty. It is often necessary to forget one's self; but is that what you do? Aren't you often found in public-houses? Don't you enjoy yourself?"

Hey? Dmitri Alexandrovitch,' they say to you, 'come to our aid, brother; we will be most grateful;' and they slip into your hand a piece of silver or a bank-note. Isn't that the way the thing is done? Tell me!"

"It is true; I acknowledge my faults. But I ask nothing of the poor, and I act honestly."

"You take nothing now; but when you are in want you will end by taking from the poor as well as from the rich. You act honestly! What a yarn! and would try to make me believe that all those you help are saints! And Borka Perikodof,—have you then forgotten him? Who took him under his protection? You ought to know something about it."

"Perikodof was to blame, I confess."

"He only spent the money of the crown; nothing but that!"

"You must also take into consideration, uncle, his poverty and his numerous family."

"Poverty! poverty! He was a drunkard, a scamp; that is the truth of it."

"He took to drink to console himself," added Mitia, lowering his voice.

"To console himself? Well, one comes to the aid of a man that is down, but does not pass whole days drinking with him. You will say that he was a good talker—a good reason indeed for passing his time in a dram-shop!"

"He was one of the best of men."

"All those with whom you are concerned are excellent men. By the way," he added, turning to his wife, "did you send him—you understand?"

Tatiana Ilinichna replied with a nod.

"What has become of you of late?" continued the old man.

"I was in town."

"Playing billiards, without doubt, drinking tea, scraping the guitar, haunting the courts, drawing petitions in the waiting-rooms, and strutting about with merchants' sons. It is so, is it not? Tell me."

"Well, let it be so if you wish," said Mitia with a smile. "Oh, but I forgot to tell you that Antone Martinitch Fountikof wants you to dine at his house on Sunday."

"I shall not go near that fellow; he regales me with magnificent fish dressed with rancid oil. God bless him."

"I met also Fédocia Mikailof."

"What Fédocia?"

"A woman who belongs to the proprietor Garpentchenko,—he who bought Mikouline at auction. Fédocia is of that country. She paid an *abrok* of a hundred and eighty-two roubles and a half, and worked as dressmaker in Moscow. She knows her trade, and she was getting a great many orders in Moscow; but Garpentchenko has called her back, and holds her without setting her at any work. She would like very much to buy her freedom, and she has even spoken to her master on the subject; but Garpentchenko has given her no reply. You know Garpentchenko, uncle, and you could say a word to him about it. As for Fédocia, she would pay a good price for her freedom."

"Not with your money? Hey? Well, well, I will speak to him about it, I promise you. But I don't know," he continued with a disturbed air. "This Garpentchenko—may God forgive him!—makes money out of everything. He lends at usury, and buys up the lands that are sold at auction. He is a sad acquisition for the country. Oh! these new-comers from Little Russia distress me! It will be hard to make any arrangement with him. But we shall see."

"Try to arrange the matter, uncle."

"Well, well, I'll try. But look well to yourself! You understand me. Come, now, don't try to excuse yourself. May God forgive you! May God forgive you! But for the future take care, or I warn you, Mitia, you will not escape, and in the end you will come to ruin. I shall not be here always to lend a helping hand. Besides, I am not so very influential myself. Go now, and God be with you."

Mitia went out, and Tatiana got up and followed him.

"Give him some tea, good soul that you are," Ovcianikof called out after her. "The fellow is not stupid," continued Ovcianikof, "and he is not bad. Still I am uneasy about him. But pardon me; I have entertained you with rather uninteresting things."

The door of the anteroom opened, and a man with a slight figure and grizzly hair, wearing a velvet jacket, came towards us.

"Ah, Frantz Ivanitch!" exclaimed Ovcianikof. "Good-day to you! How are you?"

Permit me, my dear readers, to present to you this new personage.

Frantz Ivanitch Lejeune, a proprietor in the Government of Orel, and my neighbor, had risen to the honorable rank

of a Russian gentleman in a very singular way. He was born at Orleans, and served as drummer in the army with which Napoleon proposed to conquer Russia. All went well at first, and our Frenchman entered Moscow with his head in the air. But on the retreat poor Monsieur Lejeune, half frozen and without his drum, fell into the hands of some good little peasants of the Government of Smolensk. These worthy people shut him up for the night in a deserted fulling-mill. They dragged him next morning towards a hole that they had cut in the ice and invited the drummer of the g-r-r-rand army to honor them by making a dive. Monsieur Lejeune could not subscribe to this proposition; and began to represent in his turn, but in French, to the peasants of the Government of Smolensk that they would do much better to let him return to his fireside. "My mother is still alive, gentlemen," he said to them, "and she is a very tender mother." But the peasants, probably through their ignorance of the geographical situation of Orleans, continued to urge him to undertake an aquatic journey following the sinuous course of the little river of Gniloteïka; and they had already taken upon themselves the responsibility of making him come to a decision by administering sundry thumps upon his back, when, to the indescribable satisfaction of Monsieur Lejeune, bells were heard, and very soon there appeared upon the causeway a huge sledge, the high back of which was covered with a gaudily flowered rug, and which was drawn by three vigorous well-fed horses. This equipage bore a fat proprietor with red cheeks who was wrapped warmly up in a wolf-skin pelisse.

"What are you doing there?" he asked the peasants.

"We are drowning a Frenchman, father."

"Oh," said the proprietor indifferently, turning away.

"*Monsieur, Monsieur!*" cried the poor devil.

"Eh, eh!" responded the man in wolf-skin indignantly.

"You march upon Moscow with your coalition of twenty tribes of the Gentiles; you burn Moscow—cursed that you are!—you carry off the cross of the great Ivan,¹ and now '*Moussié, Moussié!*' you cry, now your tail and ears are down. You deserve your punishment! Go on, Filka!"

The horses started off again.

"Wait a minute, however," added the proprietor. "Well, you, *Moussié*, do you know music?"

"Save me, save me, my good sir!" repeated Lejeune.

"What fellows those Frenchmen are! not one of them knows Russian! *Miousik, Miousik, savé? Miousik, vou? Savé? Come, now, speak. Compréné? savé? Miousik vou? na fortopiané joué savé?*"

Lejeune at last comprehended what the proprietor meant, and nodded his head affirmatively.

"Yes, monsieur, yes, yes, I am a musician; I play on every known kind of instrument; yes, monsieur. Save me, monsieur."

"Come, then, and God protect you," said the fat proprietor. "Let him go, children; there are twenty kopeks to drink."

"Thank you, father, thank you. Will you take him with you?"

They put Lejeune into the sledge. He was almost suffocated with joy; he wept, and trembled, and bowed, and thanked the proprietor, the coachman, and the peasants. They had left on his body only a green jacket with pink ribbons, and it was intensely cold. The proprietor silently cast his eye over his limbs, stiff and blue with the cold, wrapped him up in his pelisse, and took him home. All his household ran out to meet him. They hastened to warm up the unfortunate Frenchman; then they gave him something to eat and dressed him. The proprietor presented him to his daughters.

"Children," he said, "I have brought you a master. You give me no peace: you constantly ask me to have you taught music and the French dialect. Here is a Frenchman who knows how to play the *forte piano*. Come, *Moussié*," he added, pointing to a miserable little spinet bought five years before of a Jew who was selling cologne-water, "give us a specimen of your skill; *joué*."

Lejeune seated himself more dead than alive before the piano; it was the first time in his life that he had ever put his fingers on the keys.

"*Joué-jé, joué-jé*," repeated the proprietor.

The unfortunate man struck the keys of the piano as he would the head of his drum, entirely at random. "I thought," he told me afterwards, "that my benefactor would take me by the collar and throw me out of the window." But to the great surprise of the improvisator, the proprietor, after listening attentively for a few minutes, clapped him on the shoulder and said, "Well, very well: you know your business. Now go and rest yourself."

At the end of a few weeks Lejeune was installed in the house of another proprietor, a rich educated man, whom his frank nature pleased greatly. He married a young woman who had been brought up by the proprietor, entered the service of the state, rose to the rank that gives nobility, and married his daughter to a gentleman of the Government of Orel, an old officer of the dragoons, and a versifier. He moved afterwards to Orel, and established himself there.

Such is the individual generally known by the name of Frantz Ivanitch whom I saw come into Ovcianikof's, with whom he was very intimate.

But we have been a long time at the house of the odnodvoretz. So I must set a bound to my eloquence.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FOREST AND THE STEPPE.

IT is very possible that the reader is tired of my stories. Let him be reassured. I will end with the pages that he is about to read; but before taking leave of him, I cannot help adding a few more remarks on shooting.

Shooting has a singular attraction of itself—*für sich*, as they used to say at the time when the philosophy of Hegel was in vogue. But supposing shooting is not to your taste, you none the less like nature, and it is consequently impossible for you not to envy us sportsmen. Listen. Do you know, for example, the pleasure one feels in starting out before sunrise on a fine day in spring? You descend the steps. The sky is of a sombre gray; a few stars twinkle here and there; a moist breeze stirs, and comes running up like a light wave. You hear the low confused murmur of the night, the trees rustle softly in the darkness. A rug is spread over the téléga, and a box containing a samovar is placed under your feet. The horses shake, snort, and paw the ground gracefully. A pair of white geese have just crossed the road slowly and silently. In the garden behind a hedge the watchman is peacefully snoring. In the midst of the cool atmosphere the slightest sound remains as it were for a long time motionless and suspended. Then you take your seat. The horses start, and the téléga rolls noisily on. You proceed: you pass the church; you go down the hill, and turn to the right along the causeway. The pond is just beginning to be covered with mist. You feel a little cold, and cover your face with the collar of your cloak. Sleep steals upon you. The horses splash noisily through the puddles of water, and the coachman whistles on his seat. You have already gone four or five verstes. The heavens begin to redden near the horizon. The crows in the trees wake up and fly heavily about. The sparrows twitter about the haycocks. The darkness fades away, the road is more distinct; the sky lightens up; the clouds grow white; the fields are greener.

In the isba is seen the red flame of the *loutchina*.¹ Sleepy voices are heard in the farmyards. Day breaks little by little; already a few streaks of gold cross the sky, and the mist gathers in the ravines. The song of the lark is heard; the morning breeze, the herald of the day, springs up, and the red disk of the sun slowly appears. Light spreads like a torrent, and the heart flutters like a bird. Everything breathes freshness and joy! You cast your eyes about you. Yonder, behind the woods, a village appears; farther you discover another with a white church; still farther on a little wood of birch stands on the top of a hill; beyond this wood extends the marsh towards which you are going. Come, my good horses, quick!—a good trot; you have only three little verstes more to go. The sun rises rapidly; the sky is clear; the day will be fine. A herd files slowly out from a village and comes towards you. You hasten to ascend the hill. What a magnificent view! A river, that winds serpent-like through an expanse of country of at least ten verstes, shows blue through the mist. Green fields line its course; farther on are hillocks, and in the distance lapwings wheel around over a marsh, uttering their cries. The sight shoots like an arrow through the luminous ether spread through the air, and discovers distinctly the farthest objects. How freely one breathes! How supple the joints are! How well and full of vigor does man feel when recreated by the fresh breath of spring!

[But nothing can equal a fine morning in July! The sportsman alone can appreciate the happiness that comes from wandering about in the thickets at the dawn of day. The print of your foot shows in green upon the turf whitened with dew. You push aside the damp foliage of the bushes and feel inundated by the balmy warmth of the night imprisoned there. The air is impregnated with the fresh bitterness of the wormwood and the honeyed fragrance of the buckwheat and the clover. In the distance a grove of oaks rises like a wall lighted up by the red rays of the morning sun. It is still cool, but there is already a foretaste of the heat of the mid-day. The air is so balmy that you feel a sort of giddiness. The underbrush is interminable. In the distance only can be seen a few fields of ripening rye, and strips of reddish buckwheat. The sound of a *téléga* is heard. It is a peasant coming along at a foot-pace, and picking out in

1. A pine-knot used as a light.

advance for his horse a shady spot. You exchange a "good-day" with him, and scarcely have you passed him when the metallic sound of the scythe that he is sharpening strikes upon your ear. The sun mounts steadily upward, the grass dries rapidly, and already the heat begins to be felt. One hour—two hours pass. The sky is darker at the horizon; the air is motionless and glowing. "Brother, where can one drink?" you ask of a mower.

"Yonder in the ravine there's a spring."

You push through a thick undergrowth of hazel, interlaced with creepers, and reach the bottom of the ravine. The peasant has not deceived you: a spring is hidden at the bottom of the ravine. A clump of oaks spread their leafy branches eagerly over the water; large, silvery bubbles detach themselves from the fine velvet-like moss that carpets its bottom and swing slowly to the surface. You fling yourself down on the bank; your thirst is quenched; but a feeling of laziness steals over you, and you remain motionless. The shade that surrounds you on all sides is impregnated with a fragrant freshness. You inhale with delight, and the bushes that cover the side of the ravine before you seem to grow yellow under the burning rays of the sun. But what is that? A sudden wind passes over the country; the air seems to tremble. Can it be thunder? You leave the ravine. The heaven becomes lead-colored at the horizon. Is it heat that makes the air heavy, or is there indeed a storm brewing? There!—there is a flash in the distance; it is a storm. The sun is still overpowering; it is impossible to shoot yet. But the cloud grows larger while you gaze at it. It stretches out in front and advances overhead like a vault. The grass, the bushes, everything, grows suddenly dim. Quick! is not that a shed yonder? You run to it—you enter. What torrents! What flashes! The thatched roof lets the rain through here and there, and it moistens the fragrant hay. But the sun comes out again, the storm passes over, and you leave the barn. Ah! how gayly everything sparkles about you! How fresh and clear the air is! How soft is the fragrance of the strawberries and the mushrooms!

Now the day is failing. The evening twilight illumines half the heaven like a vast conflagration. The sun goes down. About you the air seems as transparent as crystal; but in the distance you see descending softly mists that seem still to be warm. The dew falls. The plains that a

few hours ago were inundated with the golden waves of light assume a rosy hue. The trees, the bushes, and the tall haystacks cast shadows that grow longer and longer. The sun has disappeared. A single star comes out, and trembles in the middle of the sea of flame that fires the western sky. But this fiery ocean begins to pale. The sky grows blue; the shadows blend; and night is here. It is time to seek your resting-place—the village, the isba where you intend to sleep. Gun upon your shoulder, you walk rapidly, even though overcome with fatigue. But darkness increases rapidly; you cannot see more than twenty paces ahead; even the white dogs are scarcely to be distinguished in the midst of the darkness. Above a mass of black bushes, the color of the heavens becomes a little less obscure. Can it be a fire? No, it is the rising moon. But soon to your right you discover the lights of a village. Here is your isba, and you see through the window a table covered with a cloth, and a light: it is the supper awaiting you.

Another day you have a light drochki harnessed, and you go into the woods to shoot wood-hens. How pleasant it is to enter upon a narrow path that is bordered on each side by walls of full-grown rye! The ears strike you softly in the face. The bluets stick to your feet. Quails whistle about you, and the horse trots peacefully along. Here is the wood, with its shade and its silence. The tops of the tall aspens murmur above your head. The long weeping branches of the birches scarcely sway; the stately oak stands up like a vigorous athlete beside the graceful linden. You follow a path enamelled with shadows and verdure; large yellow flies balance themselves motionlessly in the air, and suddenly disappear; gnats hover about in swarms that seem light in the shade and dark in the sun; the birds sing peacefully. How well the silvery voice of the warbler with its joyous and innocent twitter blends with the fragrance of the lily of the valley! Come! push on into the woods; the brake grows thicker; an indefinable feeling of calmness steals over your whole being. A light breath of wind stirs the tree-tops, and the sound recalls unmistakably the sound of a waterfall. Slender plants grow here and there upon the bed of withered leaves that fell last year; mushrooms with their little caps spring up by themselves. A hare suddenly starts at some distance from you; the dogs with their sonorous voices rush after it.

And how beautiful are these woods towards the end of

autumn when the woodcock come! The woodcock never stays in the thicket: he must be sought at the edge of the woods. There is no wind, nor is there any sun, nor shadow, nor motion, nor even noise. A wine-like fragrance, peculiar to autumn, spreads over the country. A transparent mist hangs motionless over the fields that grow yellow in the distance. The trees are outlined against a pale sky of milky white; a few golden leaves still hang here and there upon the bare branches of the linden. The moist earth seems elastic under foot. The tall withered plants do not stir, and long webs sparkle on the dried grass. You breathe freely, but you are strangely agitated. While you keep along the edge of the wood, with your eyes fixed upon your dog, the memory of those you love, living and dead, comes to you. Impressions long since forgotten suddenly revive. The imagination hovers and sails like a bird, and you believe you see all the images it calls up. Your heart suddenly begins to beat rapidly, and you project yourself passionately into the future or lose yourself in the past. All your life unrolls before your eyes. A man possesses himself completely, and seems to seize upon his whole past life, all his feelings, all the strength of his soul, and nothing in nature about comes to disturb these reveries—neither sun, nor wind, nor noise, nor—

And then a clear day in autumn, a little cold, when there is frost in the morning, and the silvery birches, like trees that are told about in fairy tales, are covered with golden branches; when the sun is low and its rays, though, no longer powerful, yet have greater brilliancy than in summer! A little grove of aspens, entirely despoiled of leaves and inundated with light, seems joyous in its bareness. The frost still whitens the bottom of the valley, and a fresh wind gently raises the withered leaves that cover the ground, and sweeps them before it. Long blue waves run gayly over the river, and softly rock the ducks and geese scattered over its surface. The wind brings the sound of a mill half hidden in the willows, and above it pigeons of all colors wheel rapidly about in the air.

Foggy summer days also have their beauties, but sportsmen do not care for them. It is impossible to shoot on such days: a head of game rises up under your feet, and disappears almost immediately through the white motionless gloom caused by the fog. But how quiet and silent is everything about you! Everything is awake, and yet everything

is silent. You pass a tree; not a leaf stirs; it seems to enjoy its rest with delight. A black line appears through the mist that covers everything; it looks like a curtain of woods; you draw near, and the woods change into a border of wormwood separating the two fields. Above you, about you, the fog is everywhere. But you feel a slight puff of wind: a bit of sky, of a pale blue, appears indistinctly through the rarefied mist; the mist begins to move, and seems to float like smoke. A brilliant ray of sun breaks through, spreads over the fields, touches the woods; then everything is again obscured. This happens again and again; but how calm and fine is the weather when the light, having finally triumphed in this struggle, and the last waves of heated fog blend together and cover the earth as if with a cloth, and unrolls and fades away in the bright depths of a blue sky!

Now you are on your way to a distant part of the steppe. You follow the cross-roads for ten verstes; you come to the highway. You pass long convoys of carts; you leave behind you the inns with the samovar smoking on their porches, and with their gates wide open allowing you to see the yards, in which there is always a well; villages and large green hemp-fields succeed each other; you go in this way for a long, long time. Magpies flutter on the willows that line the road; peasant women with long rakes pass over the fields; a pedestrian in an old nankeen kaftan, a knapsack on his back, walks along wearily; the heavy carriage of a noble, drawn by six lean, foundered horses, comes slowly towards us; it passes, and you see the corner of a cushion peeping out of the window, and behind, on a bag hemmed in by matting and tied with cords, clings a lackey in a surtout and covered with mud to his eyes. Here is the town of the district, with its little wooden houses tottering on their foundations, and its endless hedges, its merchants' houses built of brick and inhabited, its old bridge thrown over a deep ravine. On! on! The steppe begins. What a view is revealed from the top of this mountain! In the middle of the plain, little flat hillocks, ploughed and sown from top to bottom, are like unto enormous waves rolling up on themselves; ravines, their sides covered with bushes, are between these elevations; little groves are scattered here and there like islets, and narrow paths run from village to village; small white churches appear in the distance; a little river, lined with underbrush, winds through the middle of the plain, and here and there its course is stopped by a dam; some bustards are standing

motionless in a distant field; an old manor-house, with its dependencies and fruit-gardens, appears to be crouching on the edge of a small pond; but you still keep on. The hills grow smaller and smaller, and the country about is almost entirely destitute of trees. At last the true steppe, immense, without end!

And in winter hunting the hare over the hillocks of snow! The air that you breathe is icy cold; the brilliancy of the sparkling surface in every direction makes you blink your eyes involuntarily, and you rest them with pleasure on the blue sky above the reddish woods. And the first days of spring, when everything glitters and falls away! In the midst of the thick mist caused by the melting sun you breathe in already the fragrance of the earth that is again warm, and at the places where the oblique rays of the sun have laid bare, the larks sing cheerily, while the torrents, covered with foam, bound with a joyous roar from ravine to ravine.

But it is time to end. I have spoken just now of the spring, and this remembrance comes at the right time: in the spring you part with less regret; in the spring those who are happy feel attracted to distant lands. Farewell, dear readers: I wish you unutterable happiness.

THE END.

